

Faculty of English

‘The Auditive Intelligence’:  
Intonation in Henry James



James Lello

St Catharine's College

University of Cambridge

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2019

## ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to retrieve the ‘auditive intelligence’ in the work of Henry James, but it does so by first recognising some of the theoretical and historical obstacles that lie in the way of such a recovery.

Structural linguistics has been responsible for encouraging the assumption that there are no better or worse ways of speaking, that the differences between writing and speech are of little significance, and that tone is merely a subset of language. James’s formulation of the ‘auditive intelligence’ in his revised essay on the French actor Benoît-Constant Coquelin (1915) emerges in opposition to further, historically situated, impediments: the lack of any ‘serious study’ of tone, the false choice between saying and doing, the theatrical vogue for pictorialism, and the priority of the eye over the ear.

The ‘auditive intelligence’ makes it possible to conceive of tone as in itself a complete drama, a revelatory instant where previously concealed relations suddenly adopt an emphatic salience. In *The Tragic Muse* (1890) the discrimination of tone, both as a quality of the voice and of its discernment, emerges as one form this intelligence takes. This mode of personal and cultural edification is developed with reference to ‘The Question of Our Speech’ (1905), James’s essays on the speech and manners of American women (1906-1907), *The Awkward Age* (1899), and *The Ambassadors* (1903). The discrimination of tone depends upon the accumulation and fulfilment of experience, and this is particularly evident when tone remains long after the death of its speaker, or else is capable of preserving life itself. This is explored in ‘Frances Anne Kemble’ (1893) and *The Golden Bowl* (1904).

This thesis hopes to identify an overlooked element of James’s style, one that represents a largely unprecedented moment in English literary history; because in James’s writing intonation possesses a prosodic sophistication typically reserved for verse, the auditive intelligence forms part of his broader aspiration to transform the cultural status of the novel.

## DECLARATION

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration. It is not substantially the same as any previously or concurrently submitted for a degree, diploma, or any other qualification at the University of Cambridge, or any other University or similar institution. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or is being concurrently submitted, for any such degree or other qualification, either at this or any other University or similar institution. This thesis does not exceed the prescribed word-limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

## CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iv
REFERENCES AND ABBREVIATIONS .....	v
LIST OF FIGURES .....	x
Introduction: Care for Tone .....	1
0.0 ‘A Definite Preliminary’ .....	1
0.1 The Terminology Used in this Thesis .....	13
0.2 Careless Habits of Accuracy .....	17
0.3 Contradictions on the Tongue .....	25
0.4 The Despotism of the Eye .....	32
0.5 The Aim and Scope of this Thesis .....	37
Chapter One: ‘The Auditive Intelligence’ .....	43
1.0 Saying and Doing .....	43
1.1 The Test of Tone .....	47
1.2 ‘A Complete Drama’ .....	52
1.3 Turning Points .....	65
1.4 Tone Touchstones .....	73
1.5 Coda: ‘The Tone of Civilisation’ .....	89
Chapter Two: ‘The Drama of Discrimination’ .....	95
2.0 The Play of Discrimination .....	95
2.1 ‘The Acquisition of a New Ear’ .....	103
2.2 The Tone-Bearers .....	112
2.3 The Awkward Stage .....	117
2.4 The Rigours of Trust .....	134
2.5 The Fullness of Tone .....	144
Chapter Three: Intonations of Immortality .....	151
3.0 ‘An Absolutely Abiding Measure’ .....	151
3.1 Irresistible Resistances .....	164
3.2 Conversations with the Dead .....	173
3.3 Last Words .....	186
Coda .....	205
Bibliography .....	213

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following for their support during the writing of this thesis: Ruth Abbott, Christian Coppa, Caroline Gonda, Oliver Herford, Michael Hurley, Hester Lees-Jeffries, Laura Kilbride, John Lello, Sandra Lello, Ryan Pepin, Rosa Van Hensbergen, Lewis Wynn. I would especially like to thank my advisor, Adrian Poole, for his support and advice throughout. Natasha Pinnington also requires particular mention; she helped me see a way through some of the most difficult periods during the writing of this work.

This thesis would not have been possible without my supervisor, Tamara Follini. I owe her a great debt of thanks.

A version of the opening of Chapter 1 was delivered at the eighth International Henry James Society Conference, 'The Sound of James', in Trieste, July 2019. I would like to thank those who attended for their feedback, as well as the organisers.

I am especially grateful for the Cambridge AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership scholarship. This thesis is dedicated to my parents.

## REFERENCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

This thesis adopts the *MHRA Style Guide: A Handbook for Authors and Editors* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2013).

References to Shakespeare are to *The Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells et. al., second edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).

References to the *Oxford English Dictionary* are to *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) [<http://www.oed.com>].

### Primary Works

<i>A</i>	<i>The American</i> (London: Macmillan and Co., 1879)
<i>AA</i>	<i>The Awkward Age</i> (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1899)
<i>AB</i>	<i>The Author of Beltraffio</i> (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1885)
‘Altar’	‘The Altar of the Dead’, in <i>Terminations</i> (London: William Heinemann, 1895)
<i>AS</i>	<i>The American Scene</i> (London: Chapman and Hall, 1907)
‘Aspern’	‘The Aspern Papers’, in <i>The Aspern Papers, Louisa Pallant, The Modern Warning</i> , 2 vols (London: Macmillan and Co., 1888), I
‘Beast’	‘The Beast in the Jungle’, in <i>The Better Sort</i> (London: Methuen and Co., 1903), pp. 189-244
<i>CFHJ</i>	<i>The Cambridge Edition of the Complete Fiction of Henry James</i> , ed. by Michael Anesko, Tamara L. Follini, Philip Horne, Adrian Poole, 34 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015–), eight volumes to date

- CN* *The Complete Notebooks of Henry James*, ed. by Leon Edel and Lyall H. Powers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987)
- ‘Coquelin’ (1887) ‘Coquelin’, in *The Century Illustrated Magazine*, 33 (January, 1887), 407-13, in *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama*, vol. 2: *Drama*, ed. by Peter Collister (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 320-37
- ‘Coquelin’ (1915) ‘Coquelin’, in *Papers on Acting: II: Art and the Actor by Constant Coquelin*, trans. by Abby Langdon Alger, with an introduction by Henry James (New York: Dramatic Museum of Columbia University, 1915), pp. 1-36, in *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama*, vol. 2: *Drama*, ed. by Peter Collister (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 531-46
- CP* *The Complete Plays of Henry James*, ed. by Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis Ltd., 1949)
- CS* *Complete Stories, 1864-1874* (New York: Library of America, 1999)
- CTW1* *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America*, ed. by Richard Howard (New York: Library of America, 1993)
- CWAD1* *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama*, vol. 1: *Art*, ed. by Peter Collister (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016)
- CWAD2* *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama*, vol. 2: *Drama*, ed. by Peter Collister (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016)
- DM2* *Daisy Miller: A Study, An International Episode, Four Meetings*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan and Co., 1879) [I: ‘Daisy Miller’, ‘An International Episode’; II: ‘An International Episode’ (continued), ‘Four Meetings’]
- E* *The Europeans: A Sketch*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan and Co., 1878)

<i>GB</i>	<i>The Golden Bowl</i> (London: Methuen and Co., 1905)
<i>HJC</i>	<i>Henry James on Culture: Collected Essays on Politics and the American Social Scene</i> , ed. by Pierre A. Walker (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999)
<i>HJL</i>	<i>Henry James Letters</i> , ed. by Leon Edel, 4 vols (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1974–1984; London: Macmillan and Co., 1974–84)
<i>HJR</i>	<i>Henry James Review</i>
‘IAD’	‘Is There A Life After Death?’, in <i>In After Days: Thoughts on the Future Life</i> (London: Harper and Brothers, 1910), pp. 199-233
<i>IADFL</i>	<i>In After Days: Thoughts on the Future Life</i> (London: Harper and Brothers, 1910)
<i>IH</i>	<i>Italian Hours</i> (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1909)
<i>IT</i>	<i>The Ivory Tower</i> (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1917)
<i>LC1</i>	<i>Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers</i> , ed. by Leon Edel and Mark Wilson (New York: The Library of America, 1984)
<i>LC2</i>	<i>Literary Criticism: French Writers, Other European Writers, The Prefaces to the New York Edition</i> , ed. by Leon Edel and Mark Wilson (New York: The Library of America, 1984)
<i>LHJ</i>	<i>The Letters of Henry James</i> , ed. by Percy Lubbock, 2 vols (London: Macmillan and Co., 1920)
<i>LL</i>	<i>Henry James: A Life in Letters</i> , ed. by Philip Horne (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1999; New York: Viking Press, 1999)



<i>NYE</i>	<i>The New York Edition of the Novels and Tales of Henry James</i> , 24 vols (New York and London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907-1909)
<i>NSBMY</i>	<i>Notes of a Son and Brother and The Middle Years: A Critical Edition</i> , ed. by Peter Collister (New York and London: the author, 1914; repr. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011)
<i>MFT</i>	<i>The Madonna of the Future and Other Tales</i> , 2 vols (London: Macmillan and Co., 1879) [I: 'The Madonna of the Future', 'Longstaff's Marriage', 'Madame de Mauves'; II: 'Eugene Pickering', 'The Diary of a Man of Fifty', 'Benvolio']
<i>O</i>	<i>The Outcry</i> (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911)
<i>PC</i>	<i>The Princess Casamassima</i> , 3 vols (London: Macmillan and Co., 1886)
<i>Principles</i>	William James, <i>The Principles of Psychology</i> 2 vols (New York: the author, 1890; repr. New York: Dover Publications, 1950)
<i>QS</i>	<i>The Question of Our Speech, The Lesson of Balzac, Two Lectures</i> (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company 1905)
<i>SBOC</i>	<i>A Small Boy and Others: A Critical Edition</i> , ed. by Peter Collister (New York and London: the author, 1913, 1914; repr. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011)
<i>SP</i>	<i>The Sense of the Past</i> (London: William Collins Sons and Co., 1917)
<i>SF</i>	<i>The Sacred Fount</i> (London: Methuen and Co., 1901)
<i>SS</i>	<i>The Soft Side</i> (London: Methuen and Co., 1900) ['The Great Good Place', "'Europe'", 'Paste', 'The Real Right Thing', 'The Great Condition', 'The Tree of Knowledge', 'The Abasement of the Northmores', 'The Given Case', 'John Delavoy',

‘The Third Person’, ‘Maud-Evelyn’, ‘Miss Gunton of Poughkeepsie’]

- TM* *The Tragic Muse*, 2 vols (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1890)
- TMa* *The Two Magics* (London: William Heinemann, 1898)
- TS* *Transatlantic Sketches* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1875)
- WD* *The Wings of the Dove* (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co., 1902)
- WMK* *What Maisie Knew* (Chicago: Herbert Stone and Co., 1897)
- WT* *The Wheel of Time* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1893) [‘The Wheel of Time’, ‘Collaboration’, ‘Owen Wingrave’]
- WWS* *William Wetmore Story and His Friends: From Letters, Diaries, and Recollections*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1903)
- W1* William James, *Writings 1878-1899* (New York: Library of America, 1992)
- W2* William James, *Writings 1902-1910* (New York: Library of America, 1987)

## LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1     John Ruskin's 'Drawing of Orchises', from *The Diaries of John Ruskin*, ed. by Joan Evans and John Howard Whitehouse, 1848-1874 (Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 535     69

Le jeu de la poésie orale est un jeu entre répétition et invention, entre le plaisir de la surprise et celui de la reconnaissance (see Henry James).

Jacques Roubaud, *Poétique Remarques*

Introduction:  
'Care for Tone'

0.0 'A Definite Preliminary'

In an unsigned review of 'Mr Henry James's New Book' published in the *Manchester Guardian* on the 10 September 1902, one early reader of *The Wings of the Dove* (1902) objected to James's habit of 'throwing his words into an unnatural order, so that the sentence has to be read twice over before its meaning is grasped'.<sup>1</sup> The following sentence is then dismissed as one 'whose sense is intelligible enough with a little care, but it wants care, and it is not worth the trouble it calls for':<sup>2</sup>

What somehow in the most extraordinary way in the world had Kate wanted but to be of a sudden, more interesting than she had ever been.<sup>3</sup>

Negative reviews, especially those made by James's contemporaries, can make us alive to aspects of his style which we take for granted or to which praise has made us deaf. But the reviewer themselves wants care, not just because of their assumption that the rewards of James's sentences are far in excess of the labour required to comprehend them, or because the sentence is cited without any of its surrounding context, but because this is not a sentence James ever wrote. The sentence, as printed in the first English edition, actually reads as follows:

It pressed upon her then and there that she was still in a current determined, through her indifference, timidity, bravery, generosity – she scarce could say which – by others; that not she but the current acted, and that somebody else,

---

<sup>1</sup> Unsigned Review, 'Mr Henry James's New Book', in *Henry James: The Contemporary Reviews*, ed. by Kevin J. Hayes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 367-8 (p. 367).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in Ibid.

always, was the keeper of the lock or the dam. Kate for example had but to open the floodgate: the current moved in its mass – the current, as it had been, of her doing as Kate wanted. What, somehow, in the most extraordinary way in the world, *had* Kate wanted but to be, of a sudden, more interesting than she had ever been? Milly, for their evening then, quite held her breath with the appreciation of it.<sup>4</sup>

Maud Lowder has just been persuading Milly Theale to ask Kate Croy the extent of the latter's relation with Merton Densher, suspecting their possible intimacy. Maud Lowder seeks to ascertain whether or not they have been in correspondence, and if he has returned from New York to London. Milly, however, worries that to discuss Densher after not mentioning him for so long will prove compromising, to which Mrs Lowder adds that it is Kate's silence, rather than Milly's, that is more curious. Milly then realises that 'she should have done nothing aunt Maud had just asked her' (*WD*: 226), since this makes her feel as though she existed in a 'current' determined wholly by others, determined, above all, by Kate. But it is not just the reviewer's suppression of this context that makes James's sentence difficult to understand, but also their removal of its cues for tone, most conspicuously on the auxiliary verb ('*had*'). On the one hand, this stress performs a clarificatory function, guiding the reader back to the main clause after the momentary subordination. On the other, it establishes continuity with the previous sentence by discriminating against it. This also shifts attention away from Milly 'doing as Kate wanted' to the specific nature of the desire itself, to be 'more interesting than she ever had been'. A momentary alteration in consciousness is effected: either the narrator enters into the mind of Kate so as to lay bare the pressing urgency of her desire, or Milly enters the mind of her interlocutor, imagining the kind of control and influence she herself lacks. The potential for jealousy in the second instance is audible if we hear 'more interesting

---

<sup>4</sup> Henry James, *The Wings of the Dove* (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co., Ltd., 1902), p. 226. The passage remains substantially unchanged in the first American edition, which prints 'flood-gate' instead of 'floodgate', *The Wings of the Dove*, 2 vols (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), I, pp. 299-300. The *New York Edition* also prints 'flood-gate', and makes the following change: 'somebody else always was the keeper of the lock or the dam', *NYE*, XIX, p. 274.

than *she* ever had been'; rather than implying that Kate wants to become more interesting than ever, this suggests that Kate wants to become more interesting than Milly, changing the tone from self-advancement to rivalry. This is also true if the 'current' is an analogy for '*her* doing as Kate wanted' (Kate is telling Milly what to do), or alternatively 'of her doing as *Kate* wanted' (emphasising the extent to which Milly's desire is not in question). By contrast, to stress 'Kate' ('[w]hat [...] had *Kate* wanted') would keep the narrative voice within the third person to a far greater extent, as well as distinguishing Kate's desire to be interesting from anyone else's, or implying that they could have desires of their own which remain undisclosed. To stress 'wanted' ('[w]hat [...] had Kate *wanted*') might enable James a degree of free indirect speech, but it would also change the sense, either making Kate's desire sound insufficiently fulfilled (as in 'she *wanted* to be interesting, but could not be so'), or else placing too much weight on her desire to be interesting and influential, rather than the nature of its success. '*Had*' locates the wanting in the pluperfect, so that Kate's is above all else an achieved desire not only exceptionally efficacious, but performed 'in the most extraordinary way in the world'. The placement of a single emphasis thus testifies to James's ability to hold competing consciousnesses in suspense. To change the intonation of James's sentence is not just to hear it in a different way, or even to make it more difficult than it might actually be; to change the intonation is to write a different sentence, even when the words themselves remain unchanged. Rather than locating the challenges of James's style exclusively within his syntax, what the reviewer calls the 'unnatural order' of his words, caring for *tone* might allow us to read James in an entirely new way.

'Care' is an especially appropriate way to approach the subject of intonation in Henry James, not least because he himself insists upon its propaedeutic function: '[i]t is impossible, in very fact, to have a tone-standard without the definite preliminary of a *care* for tone, and against a care for tone, it would very much appear, the elements of life in this country, as at present conditioned, violently and increasingly militate', as he writes in his address, 'The Question of Our Speech', delivered to a graduating class of young women at Bryn Mawr College,

Pennsylvania, June 8 1905 (QS: 13).<sup>5</sup> James proceeds to outline the characteristics of this care:

The voice, I repeat, is, as too much of its action and much of its effect, not a separate, lonely, lost thing, but largely what the tone, the conscious, the intended, associated tone, makes of it – and what the tone that has none of these attributes falls short of making; so that if we here again, as a people, take care, if we take even common care, of the question, for fifty years or thereabout, I have no doubt we shall in due course find the subject of our solicitude put on, positively, a surface, find it reflect and repay the enlightened effort. We shall find that, while we have been so well occupied, the vocal, the tonic possibilities within us all, grateful to us for the sense of a flattering interest, of the offer of a new life, have been taking care, better care, excellent care, of *themselves*. (QS: 35-36)

To care for tone is to care for many things besides, hence the invocation of ‘the *whole* of the burden of a care for tone’, despite the ‘inevitably rather light heads and hearts’ of James’s audience (QS: 13). To contemporary ears however, many of these arguments might now be dismissed as an expression of the novelist’s ‘high cultural ideals’.<sup>6</sup> ‘Care’ may presuppose certain stereotypical forms of dependency; tone is either a kind of orphan, a ‘separate, lonely, lost thing’, or, as James will go on to say, the proverbial damsel in distress, ‘our unrescued Andromeda’ (QS: 39), waiting to be saved from aesthetic ruin by one who had mastered the distinctions between ‘form and the absence of form’ (QS: 36). In Mark Seltzer’s Foucauldian study of James, care represents a regulatory technique within an elaborate system of social policing

---

<sup>5</sup> ‘The Question of Our Speech’ was first published in *Appleton’s Booklovers Magazine*, 6 (1905), 199-210. It was subsequently collected in *The Question of Our Speech; The Lesson of Balzac; Two Lectures* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin-Riverside Press, 1905), pp. 3-52.

<sup>6</sup> John Carlos Rowe, for example, objects that ‘[f]rom Marxist, feminist, and cultural studies perspectives, it is a troubling, if not nasty, little talk, filled with James’s fears of what immigration will do to the “American idiom” and his appeals to his women auditors for whom “voice” and “tone” are matters of special importance’, *The Other Henry James* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 31.



and surveillance (for Foucault, even to be a subject *is* to be subjected).<sup>7</sup> Care not only risks harming what it professes to protect. It also *conditions*, rather than simply responds to, the vulnerability of its object. This would confirm Robert Pippin's more recent suggestion that James's writing depicts the collapse as opposed to the creation of solicitude and sociability in a manner emblematic of 'modern moral life'.<sup>8</sup> If we have to be kind to be cruel, the perceived hierarchies of expression underlying 'tone' become still more problematic (particularly when the voice is so conspicuously gendered). In the face of such compelling diagnoses, how might a care for tone be practicable or even thinkable? When we care for tone, what are we caring for?

James was deeply cognisant of the proximity of care to coercion, aware that to accede to the importance of 'not working harm' might also presume a violence in advance (*GB*: 333). In *The American*, Christopher Newman's care for his intended wife is not only imagined as like 'the wistful critic or artist who studies "style" in some exquisite work', but also possesses 'the quality of that solicitude with which a fond mother might watch from the window even the restricted garden-play of a child recovering from an accident' (*NYE* II: 240, 241). This might at first appear to confirm the kind of care for tone in James's lecture, and the student of style's question to themselves, "[h]ow could I have got on without this particular research"?' (*NYE* II: 241), echoes James's own advocacy for a care for tone: the 'more you listen to it [tone] the more you will love it – the more you will wonder that you could ever had lived without it' (*QS*: 50). Upon closer inspection however, this care is of an alarmingly negligent order, not least because the child in the metaphor has always already fallen over. To read care in this way is to read Newman as far

---

<sup>7</sup> Mark Seltzer, *Henry James and the Art of Power* (New York and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), pp. 59-95; Michel Foucault, *The Care for the Self: Volume 3 of The History of Sexuality*, trans. by Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1986).

<sup>8</sup> Robert Pippin, *Henry James and Modern Moral Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 85.

more complicit in his betrayal than an American innocent whose passion is denied at the last moment by the hardness of the French aristocracy.<sup>9</sup>

Whilst this confirms the entwinement of care and coercion, it also demonstrates that it is precisely because James is so sensitive to corruptibility of care, especially when he visits America, that he makes so strong a case, in his lecture, for it at all. When the passage above is inspected closely, ‘care for tone’ emerges as reparative rather than interpellative in kind, advocating what happens if we ‘as a people, take care’.<sup>10</sup> This phrase is then revised on the wing to ‘if we take even common care’, transforming the sense of people as primary carers to an implication that this shared solicitude becomes a constituent part of care itself. If ‘even’ is stressed instead of ‘common’, we might either hear it as an adjective correcting solicitude’s unequal distribution, or alternatively as an advance or concession (depending on how highly ‘common’ is valued). It would seem to be valued very highly indeed, since James is advocating care as an ‘unconscious beautiful habit’ (*QS*: 17), suggesting less a hierarchy of the carer over the cared than an insistence upon the ‘care’ that lies ‘within us all’. Finally, this ‘common’ care is itself exceeded at the end of the passage by the ‘care, excellent care’ tone takes of itself. The ‘surface’ put on by the ‘subject of our solicitude’ (‘subject’ referring to the ‘vocal, tonic possibilities’ rather than to care itself) is then able to ‘reflect and

---

<sup>9</sup> As suggested by James himself in his letter to William Dean Howells, 24 October [1876]: ‘[t]he wrong of course is that the American is cheated out of Mme de Cintré’ (*HJL* II: 70). John Carlos Rowe cites Newman’s ‘childishly selfish’ rejection of the ‘political responsibilities of the self’ which involves treating the entire Bellegarde family like ‘helpless children in need of his paternal care’, ‘The Politics of Innocence in Henry James’s *The American*’, in *New Essays on ‘The American’*, ed. by Martha Banta (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 87-88 (p. 91). For another negative reading of Newman, see Mutlu Blasing, ‘Double Focus in *The American*’, *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 28 (1973), 74-84.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Interpellation’ is here used in Louis Althusser’s sense, for whom ideology ‘hails’ subjects into subjection, ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)’, in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), pp. 85-126 (p. 118). For the ways this informs Foucault’s subsequent account of the discursive production of the subject, see Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 4.

repay' the attention initially granted to it, as though this surface had become so finely worked over as to resemble a mirror ('repayment', moreover, introduces a metaphorical transaction recalled by the 'interest' and 'offer' of 'new life'). Rather than a vulnerable dependency controlled by a naturalised authoritativeness masquerading as care, we might alternatively imagine the abandoned voice no longer as fearfully destitute but quickly responsive to the attention that might be paid to it. This mutual reflection between the carer and the cared means that, by the end of the passage, we no longer care for tone, but tone cares for us. To care for tone is therefore to engage in a collaborative exchange that is also a condition of trust, since tone also repays our effort 'if we here again, as a people, take care'.

We might hear 'hear' in 'here' here, as though James were both specifying the location of our care and the means of its discovery. Another pun (puns themselves being ways of 'hearing again') occurs when James alludes to the 'tonic possibilities', 'tonic' implying a connection between tone and medication. When James wrote to Frederick Harrison a decade later on 3 July 1915, he complained how the 'atmosphere of London just now is not positively tonic; but one must *find* a tone' (*LHJ* II: 485), as though, after the assault inflicted on the general social consciousness by the First World War, finding a tone were the best way of finding a cure. The 'vocal, the tonic possibilities' may well reflect and reward our attention, like the surface of a mirror or a redeemed investment. However, James does not actually make explicit that tone ever *accepts* this 'offer of a new life'. Better still, we discover that the 'vocal, the tonic possibilities' have not only been taking care of us, but have been 'taking care, excellent care of *themselves*' all along. Abandonment is swiftly converted into autonomy, if 'autonomy' is quite the right term here for the freedom implicated within this imagined social community.

After advocating the need to care for tone, James argues the following:

There are in every quarter, in our social order, impunities of aggression and corruption in plenty; but there are none, I think, showing so unperturbed a face – wearing, I should slangily say, if slang were permitted me here, so impudent a “mug” – as the forces assembled to make you believe that no form of speech

is provably better than another, and that just this matter of “care” is an affront to the majesty of sovereign ignorance. (*QS*: 18)

‘Sovereign ignorance’ anticipates the ‘sovereign truth’ declared at the close of James’s ‘Preface’ to *The Golden Bowl* that, amongst other dicta, ‘care [is] nothing if not active’ (*LC2*: 1341). Because an inactive care so contributes to the ‘mere state of indifference to a speech-standard and to a tone-standard’ (*QS*: 35), the sceptical response that dismisses James’s ‘care for tone’ as prejudicial risks a prejudice of its own: a commitment to descriptive neutrality that will not admit the possibility of better or worse styles of expression. The distinction between prescription and description may have been necessary for the self-legitimation of linguistics as a science of language at the start of the twentieth-century,<sup>11</sup> but prioritising description over prescription also refuses to admit any one tone as better or worse than any other, only concerning itself with the documentation of ‘usage’.<sup>12</sup> There is something inherently self-defeating about this drive to perfected descriptivism, undermining the significance of that which it seeks to ‘describe’. When ‘whatever is accepted is acceptable’,<sup>13</sup> the result is not more, but less freedom of taste, making it impossible to envisage what James calls the ‘art’ of tone (*QS*: 8, 16, 28).

Many of the most important accounts of James and style in recent years tend to understand language, and especially syntax and semantics, as the primary, even at

---

<sup>11</sup> Peter Collister, ed., notes that ‘[w]ith its prescriptive rather than descriptive observations of specifically American usages and idioms, the speech might have been more appropriately titled “The Question of *your* Speech”’, *The American Scene* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 549.

<sup>12</sup> See Roy Harris, ‘Communication and Language’, in *The Foundations of Linguistic Theory: Selected Writings of Roy Harris*, ed. by Nigel Love (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 136-150 (p. 141).

<sup>13</sup> Eric Griffiths, ‘The Lavender of the Subjunctive’, review of Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey K. Pullum, *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (2002), *The Guardian* (13 July 2002)  
<<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/jul/13/referenceandlanguages.highereducation>>  
[accessed 1 November 2019].

times the exclusive, modes of expression.<sup>14</sup> Even James's 'Talk on Tone', to use its working title,<sup>15</sup> has been understood as taking language as its primary focus: 'it claims language to be the very groundwork of civilization'.<sup>16</sup> One editor, Pierre Walker, goes so far as to understand James operating 'like' a structural linguist:

The basis of language, James realized even before the similar insight of Ferdinand de Saussure, the founder of structuralist linguistics, is differences, or discriminations, as James prefers to call them. Like a structuralist linguist, in 'The Question of Our Speech,' James discusses the mutual dependence of consonants and vowels upon each other and the importance of distinguishing – discriminating – between variations of sound.<sup>17</sup>

Yet James's care for tone, I argue, renders inoperable the distinction between prescription and description so fundamental to structural linguistics, whilst his claim that discriminations of sound are linked to all sorts of other discriminations in society, just as to care for tone is to care for people, is not to be confused with the Saussurean understanding of the relative motivation of the sign,<sup>18</sup> nor the assumption that language is exclusively the medium in which thinking takes place, or that

---

<sup>14</sup> Sheila Teahan, *The Rhetorical Logic of Henry James* (London: Louisiana State University Press, 1995); Mary Cross, *Henry James: The Contingencies of Style* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993); Seymour Chatman, *The Later Style of Henry James* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972); Ian Watt, 'The First Paragraph of *The Ambassadors*: An Explication', *Essays in Criticism*, 19 (1960), 250-74. For a recent exception, see Oliver Herford: 'in the late personal writings [...] syntax and semantics are not the most important features of style', *Henry James's Style of Retrospect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> James writes to Elizabeth Jordan, June 17 1906, of the 'three papers', that 'I think they should make a little *explicit trio* on the subject of our Women's Speech – entitled "The Speech of our Women," "A Talk on Tone" (I, II, III) or something of the sort' (*HJL* IV: 411).

<sup>16</sup> James Tuttleton, *The Novel of Manners in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), p. 84. This thesis adopts British spellings ('civilisation' rather than 'civilization'), apart from those instances where American spelling is used in quotations.

<sup>17</sup> Walker, ed., 'Introduction' to *HJC*, pp. ix-xliv (p. xxxi).

<sup>18</sup> For Saussure, 'the sign may be motivated to a certain extent' by its differential relation to other signs, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. by Roy Harris (London: Duckworth, 1983), p. 130.

cognition is structured like a language.<sup>19</sup> This is not to deny the often central role syntax plays in determining intonation. Indeed, in the absence of visual or phonological cues, syntax is especially important for providing the best clues for tone.<sup>20</sup> In his influential essay, ‘The Sentence Structure of Henry James’ (1946), R.W. Short argues that the quality of circumlocution in late James is not caused by excessive hypotaxis or subordination, as is often assumed, but rather the manner in which his syntax forces stress upon connectives rather than substantives, using conjunctions in awkwardly emphatic positions.<sup>21</sup> When the Prince says to Charlotte, “[h]ow can I not feel more than anything else how they adore together my boy?” (GB: 217), the emphasis on “together” suggests that James ‘often so misordered his sentence that the new alignment of elements created not only the emphasis but some definition of it; this is an achievement more common in poetry than in prose’.<sup>22</sup> However, Short ultimately discounts the use of ‘emphasis’ altogether because it lacks the ‘explosive force’ of poetry; ‘perhaps it is better not to think of it as emphasis so much as greatly extended plasticity of structure’.<sup>23</sup> He also implies that James had a thought first and then ‘misordered’ it afterwards, rather than the intonational contour being a mode in which thinking occurs. The reviewer with which this ‘Introduction’ began similarly understands James to be doing little more than ‘throwing’ his words into an ‘unnatural order’.

This thesis asks, instead, what it might mean to think of James as a writer, as the novelist William Gass argues, for whom

---

<sup>19</sup> See Ruth Bernard Yeazell, ‘The Syntax of Knowing’, *Language and Knowledge in the Late Novels of Henry James* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1976), pp. 16-36.

<sup>20</sup> In the two sentences ‘[t]hey were looking for you’ and ‘[i]t was you they were looking for’, ‘you’ is stressed in the second instance and not in the first, Dwight Bolinger, *Intonation and its Parts: Melody in Spoken English* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), p. 20.

<sup>21</sup> R.W. Short, ‘The Sentence Structure of Henry James’, *American Literature*, 18 (1946), 71-88 (74-5).

<sup>22</sup> Dwight Bolinger influentially advocates an understanding of intonation as a ‘nonarbitrary, sound-symbolic system’, ‘nonarbitrary’ in the sense that tones possess their ‘own inherent meanings’ rather than functioning as an ‘arbitrary component of some higher unit’, *Intonation and its Parts*, p. 74.

<sup>23</sup> Short, 75.

the sounds of the words, normally rather arbitrary and accidental properties of what we want to convey, are the object of the greatest care, and that patterns are produced quite different from the ones which syntax requires; and these organize and direct its course.<sup>24</sup>

Gass is at this point implying an analogy between the shopkeeper's care for his bibelots in *The Golden Bowl* and James's care for the sound of his sentences. Gass's concern is with the sound of prose in a very literal sense, rather than intonation specifically, and this explains why the traced patterns are 'quite different' from syntax. Nevertheless, his suggestion that the sound of prose may no longer be governed by the concept of *arbitrariness*, for which linguistics, and Saussure pre-eminently, is largely responsible, also applies to tone.<sup>25</sup> A 'linguistics of prosody', John J. Gumperz notes in his 'Foreword' to *Prosody in Conversation*, will thus only continue to propagate

the common Saussurian view that words, phrases and sentences make up the core of language and that prosody is somehow derivative, and can be treated as an expressive overlay that supplements or modulates the more basic propositional content.<sup>26</sup>

To 'care for tone' is thus to care for what Ann Wennerstrom has described as *The Music of Everyday Speech*, whereby the tone of a statement, rather than any propositional content, carries its illocutionary force.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> William H. Gass, 'Culture, Self, and Style', in *Habitations of the Word: Essays* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), pp. 185-205 (p. 194).

<sup>25</sup> Dwight Bolinger, *Intonation and its Uses* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> John J. Gumperz, 'Foreword' to *Prosody in Conversation: Interactional Studies*, ed. by Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen and Margret Selting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. x-xii (p. xi).

<sup>27</sup> '[T]he contour itself is a kind of speech act', 'even if the lexicogrammatical structure remains constant', Ann Wennerstrom, *The Music of Everyday Speech: Prosody and Discourse Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 142, 131. See also Dwight Bolinger, 'Introduction', in *Intonation: Selected Readings*, ed. by Dwight Bolinger (Middlesex: Harmondsworth, 1972), pp. 11-18 (p. 11).

Care for tone not only makes an important contribution to our understanding of intonation; intonation itself demands a reconsideration of some of the most important aspects of James's writing, particularly with regard to his own reservations about 'style'. In his 1875 review of Swinburne's *Essays and Studies*, James complains that Swinburne's essay on Victor Hugo's novel, *L'Homme qui Rit* (1869), is forever in love with the sound of its own voice: '[i]t is always listening to itself – always turning its head over its shoulders to see its train flowing behind it' so that '[o]ne-half of his sentence is always a repetition, for mere fancy's sake and nothing more, of the meaning of the other half – a play upon its words, an echo, a reflection, a duplication.'<sup>28</sup> Intonation avoids this risk of making 'style' bear too much weight, or bear it in the wrong way (think of Newman's 'critic' of "style"). James's 'Introduction' (1902) to *Madame Bovary* similarly resists the Flaubertian conviction that a novel should be 'all' style: '[s]tyle itself moreover, with all respect to Flaubert, never *totally* beguiles; since even when we are so queerly constituted as to be ninety-nine parts literary we are still a hundredth part something else.'<sup>29</sup> Intonation will always make room for this one percent, not only because the burden as well as the benefit of a care for tone is that it involves a care for many other things besides, but because tone is also how James does things with words.

This 'Introduction' seeks to identify some further elements that 'militate' against a care for tone in James's lifetime as well as our own. It falls into five parts: the first outlines the terms used in this thesis, as well as the challenges faced when a definition of tone is attempted solely from the standpoint of linguistics; the second argues that structural linguistics is responsible for an insensitivity to the differences between writing and speech, encouraging a misguided commitment to the

---

<sup>28</sup> Henry James, review of Algernon Charles Swinburne, *Essays and Studies* (1875), in *LCI*, pp. 1278-1283 (p. 1282). George Saintsbury subsequently focused, albeit positively, on the same Swinburne passage with which James took issue (ending in the same place, but starting two sentences further back), in *A History of English Prose Rhythm* (London: Macmillan, 1912), p. 433.

<sup>29</sup> Henry James, 'Introduction' to *Madame Bovary*, trans. by W. Blaydes (New York: P.F. Collier and Son, 1902), pp. v-xliii (p. xxxvi).



importance of notational exactitude. The third section argues that many of the central claims in the most significant and sustained critical account of the relationship between writing and speaking to date, Eric Griffiths's *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry* (1989), partly derive from James.<sup>30</sup> The insufficient acknowledgement of this fact will continue so as long as intonation is understood as exclusively a concern of poetry. The fourth section briefly outlines the dominance of the eye over the ear in James studies, and the fifth and final section locates this research within the context of recent approaches to sound in nineteenth-century scholarship more generally, before a brief summary of the chapters to come.

### 0.1 The Terminology Used in this Thesis

Whilst there is 'wide agreement among linguists on the units of sound that make distinctions in word meanings', there is 'no such agreement on the units of intonation'.<sup>31</sup> Tone 'does not always offer a "unit" analogous to the phoneme, susceptible of being built up into larger structures',<sup>32</sup> and so a bottom-up approach which seeks to build intonation contours upon phonemic units will struggle to account for units at a higher level.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, 'the fact that our term for such contours, "suprasegmentals", names its phenomenon in terms of what they are *not*, i.e., segments, suggests that our episteme is no better equipped for thinking non-unitary phenomena than it is non-visual phenomena'.<sup>34</sup> The very existence of a term like

---

<sup>30</sup> Eric Griffiths, *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>31</sup> Bolinger, ed., pp. 11-18 (p. 14).

<sup>32</sup> Fernando Poyatos, *Paralanguage* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1993), p. 130. Couper-Kuhlen and Margret Selting also reject approaching 'speech melodies and rhythms' as though they were 'phoneme- or morpheme-like entities', 'Towards an Interactional Perspective', in *Prosody in Conversation*, ed. by Couper-Kuhlen and Selting, pp. 11-56 (p. 11).

<sup>33</sup> Anthony Fox, *Prosodic Features and Prosodic Structure: The Phonology of Suprasegmentals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 269, 363.

<sup>34</sup> David Nowell Smith, *On Voice in Poetry: The Work of Animation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 7. David Crystal also notes that the terms 'non-segmental' and 'suprasegmental' are themselves 'unfortunately negative in character', *The English Tone of Voice* (London: Edward Arnold, 1975), p. vii.

‘paralanguage’ signals the difficulty linguistics has in accounting for those aspects of meaning that lie beyond or alongside language. An inability to locate precisely where a sentence starts and where it stops is, moreover, one reason why ‘linguists are still, after centuries of trying, unable to give a precise definition of a sentence’.<sup>35</sup>

A more inclusive definition of intonation is therefore appealing, referring to ‘all the expressiveness of the human voice, whether contributed by pause and rhythm, by depth of resonance, by weak or forceful articulation, or by the levels, ranges, or ups and downs of fundamental pitch’ that ‘show greater or lesser degrees of excitement, boredom, curiosity, positiveness, etc’.<sup>36</sup> Intonation here refers to the higher level landscape or ‘contour’ of an utterance within which lower levels such as ‘stress’, ‘accent’, ‘emphasis’, or ‘rhythm’ might be specified, all of which in turn might be altered by pitch or tempo. Changing the ‘pitch’ of an accent will not alter which syllable is ‘accented’ or ‘stressed’, but will change the overall melody or intonation contour. Unlike ‘accent’, which is generally understood to be inherently variable, idiosyncratic, and context-dependent,<sup>37</sup> ‘stress’ is ‘a phonological characteristic of lexical items and is largely fixed and predictable’.<sup>38</sup> As Bolinger notes, ‘the stressed syllable is the one that carries the potential for accent’, which is to say that whilst the first syllable of a word may be ‘stressed’, this does not technically mean it is ‘accented’.<sup>39</sup> Following Wennerstrom, this thesis also understands this distinction between ‘stress’ and ‘accent’ to distinguish ‘stress’ from ‘intonation’, since intonation can ‘be altered depending on the discourse role played by the constituents with which tones are associated’.<sup>40</sup> This is also why ‘intonation has the greater potential to influence discourse meaning, whereas stress is more a

---

<sup>35</sup> Bolinger, *Intonation and its Parts*, p. 254.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 215, 11.

<sup>37</sup> For Bolinger, ‘the distribution of sentence accents is not determined by syntactic structure but by semantic and emotional highlighting’, ‘Accent is Predictable (If You’re a Mind Reader)’, *Language*, 48 (1972), 633-44 (644).

<sup>38</sup> Wennerstrom, p. 47.

<sup>39</sup> Bolinger, *Intonation and its Parts*, p. 15.

<sup>40</sup> Wennerstrom, p. 47.

matter of pronunciation'.<sup>41</sup> 'Rhythm', in contrast, provides 'an underlying hierarchical structure upon which stress is built, while intonation components are associated with the high points of these rhythmic hierarchies'.<sup>42</sup> Thus stress is comparatively fixed when compared to accent, but when these stressed syllables are temporally aligned they nevertheless become essential to the coherence of a sentence. Accent will also affect the rhythm of a statement, since it has the 'routine job of giving prosodic shape and rhythm to words by highlighting some syllables and not others'.<sup>43</sup> In this thesis, intonation is used to refer to the "'melody" of the voice during speech' which, in writing, does not automatically derive from stress patterns or syntax but also depends on those decisions made by a speaker, especially in the light of salient information.<sup>44</sup>

There are further distinctions to which we should be alert: when James claims that 'there is no such thing as a voice pure and simple' but only what the 'tone, the conscious, intended, associated tone, makes of it' (*QS*: 24, 35), he implies a difference between 'voice' and 'tone'. The one only occurs alongside the other *after* the reciprocal and mutually informing sociability between care and tone, and so the ability to refer to the voice and tone synonymously ('the vocal, the tonic possibilities within us all') represents a historical achievement rather than a natural fact. This thesis also focuses on tone rather than the voice, or, in Jonathan Culler's terms, 'voicing' over the 'voice', a distinction that avoids the kind of metaphysical priority over writing the 'voice' is sometimes afforded.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>43</sup> Gerald Knowles, 'Variable Strategies in Intonation', in *Intonation, Accent and Rhythm: Studies in Discourse Phonology*, ed. by Dafydd Gibbon and Helmut Richter (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), pp. 226-41 (p. 229).

<sup>44</sup> Just as a 'paralinguistic variation of pitch can be used to highlight particular constituents, exaggerating their basic intonation patterns', Wennerstrom, p. 46.

<sup>45</sup> 'Rather than imagine that lyrics embody voices, we do better to say that they create effects of voicing, of aurality', Jonathan Culler, *The Theory of the Lyric* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2017), p. 35; Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by G. C. Spivak (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 8. For a more generous account of Derrida and the voice, see David Nowell Smith, *On Voice in Poetry*, pp. 48-76.

Pursuing ‘voicing’ over ‘voice’ in this way encourages a further distinction between ‘tone’ and ‘intonation’. Unlike even the most general definition of ‘intonation’, ‘tone’ might be dismissed as at best intuitive and at worst unhelpfully vague. Like ‘voice’, it often relies upon metaphorical registers that are far from exacting. However, James frequently makes us wonder whether ‘intonation’ and ‘tone’ can be so readily distinguished. In ‘The Author of Beltraffio’ (1884), an exchange occurs between the enthusiastic narrator and Mark Ambient’s reserved wife, the former asserting that Mark Ambient’s house appears to share the same ‘tone’ as his prose (*AB*: 22). Whilst ‘tone’ here suggests a marked temperament of mind, the spirit or tenor of his style, this is itself expressed by the narrator’s marked, or over-marked, intonation: “[o]h, it has got his *tone*,” I said laughing, and insisting on my point the more that Mrs Ambient appeared to see in my appreciation of her simple establishment a sign of limited experience’ (*AB*: 22). Indeed, the intonation of this ‘*tone*’ marks the narrator’s separation from Mrs Ambient, who will not countenance the idea of sharing her life with the ‘tone’ of her husband’s prose, a distinction with, as it transpires, fatal consequences. In *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), Mr Vetch similarly has an ‘intonation’ of a ‘tone’: our attention is drawn to the way he ‘said “after all,” because that was part of his tone’ (*PC* I: 27). It is also possible to refer to the lack of ‘tone’ of an ‘intonation’, as when, in *The Ambassadors* (1903), Mrs Newsome’s ‘tone was even more in her style than in her voice’.<sup>46</sup> Just as it explores ‘voicing’ over ‘voice’, this thesis focuses on ‘tone’ in the sense of ‘intonation’ as opposed to the sense of temperament or atmosphere, but it is nevertheless alive to the ways in which the two might on occasion prove to be mutually informing.

Given the definitional challenges posed by ‘intonation’, it is easy to see why Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen and Margret Selting argue that ‘[i]f prosody is understood to comprise the “musical” attributes of speech – auditory effects such as melody, dynamics, rhythm, tempo and pause – then it is surely no exaggeration to state that a

---

<sup>46</sup> Henry James, *The Ambassadors*, ed. by Nicola Bradbury, in *CFHJ*, XVIII (2015), p. 50.

large part of this field has been left untilled by modern structural linguistics.’<sup>47</sup> Even within the field of poetics, the neglect of tone is apparent:

As still they continue to do to this day: *The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics*, revised as recently as 2012 and billing itself as ‘the most comprehensive and authoritative reference for students, scholars, and poets on all aspects of its subject: history, movements, genres, prosody, rhetorical devices, critical terms, and more’, still lacks an entry for intonation.<sup>48</sup>

One has only to observe the variety of taxonomic and notational variants in Bolinger’s edited collection of essays on *Intonation* to see how the subject suffers from a ‘permanent conceptual intractability’, in Eric Griffiths’s words, which simply sharpening our critical vocabulary cannot effectively resolve.<sup>49</sup> Rather than methodological errors to be explained away, therefore, such definitional challenges might more productively be understood as part of the subject of intonation itself. This constitutive ambiguity is especially evident when intonation is considered in relation to notation, as the following section will show.

## 0.2 Careless Habits of Accuracy

Common to many approaches to intonation from the perspective of structural linguistics is a critical deafness to the differences between writing and speech. This goes at least as far back as Saussure’s separation of *parole* from *langue*, of “‘language as a system’” from “‘the actual manifestation of language in speech or writing’”.<sup>50</sup> As Griffiths observes:

---

<sup>47</sup> Couper-Kuhlen and Selting, ‘Towards an Interactional Perspective’, in *Prosody in Conversation*, ed. by Couper-Kuhlen and Selting, p. 11.

<sup>48</sup> Cited by Natalie Gerber and David Nowell Smith, ‘Editors Introduction: Intonation’, *Thinking Verse*, 5 (2015), 1-14 (6).

<sup>49</sup> Bolinger, ed., p. 14; Griffiths, *Printed*, p. 20.

<sup>50</sup> Jonathan Culler, ‘Introduction’ to Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. by Wade Baskin, 2nd edition (London: Fontana-Collins, 1974), pp. xi-xxv (p. xvii). Cited by Griffiths, *Printed*, pp. 20-21.

That “or”, “in speech or writing”, hints at an indifference between the manifestations of *langue* in speech and writing, as if *langue* turned up in both of them in the same way though, as Saussure insisted, more richly in speech, the linguist’s prime quarry for extraction of materials for the study of *langue*.<sup>51</sup>

This explains Saussure’s desire for a ‘means of transcribing articulated sounds that will rule out all ambiguity’.<sup>52</sup> The notion of ‘adequacy’ or ‘accuracy’ thus remains a largely misplaced preoccupation for intonational notation, relevant perhaps only when there is an essentially insuperable ambiguity of sense. As Peter Brooks reminds us:

The very rhythm and punctuation of late Jamesian conversations – “he hung fire”, “this fairly gave him an arrest,” “she took it in,” “she stared” – suggest the need to postulate meanings in the margins between words, a desire to make the reader strain toward making darkness visible.<sup>53</sup>

‘[D]arkness visible’ because novels do not read themselves, no matter how detailed their cues for tone are, and because the kinds of dramas with which James is so concerned involve characters who are themselves engaged in attempts to decipher the intonations of others.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> Griffiths, *Printed*, p. 20.

<sup>52</sup> Cited in *ibid*.

<sup>53</sup> Peter Brooks, ‘The Melodrama of Consciousness’, in *Henry James: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Ruth Bernard Yeazell (London: Pearson, 1994), pp. 15-38 (p. 38). For a notorious account of the limited resources for notating tone in print, see J.L. Austin, who argues that our means of reproducing ‘the tone of voice, cadence, and emphasis’ such as ‘[p]unctuation, italics, and word order’ are ‘rather crude’, as though the greater our technological development the less equivocal our notation would become, *How To Do Things With Words*, ed. by J.O. Urmson, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 74.

<sup>54</sup> Mark Goble emphasises the unprecedentedly ‘systematic rigour’ with which James pursues the ‘social advantage’ offered to those who recognise ‘minute shifts in emotional context and emphasis’, ‘Media and Communication Technologies’, in *Henry James in Context*, ed. by David McWhirter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 203-13 (p. 203). Goble refers to Jurgen Ruesch, *Nonverbal Communication: Notes on the Visual Perception of Human Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956).

So when Ezra Pound complains that James ‘does not seem to me at all times evenly skillful in catching the intonations of speech’, citing ‘the beginning of “The Birthplace” [1903]’ to demonstrate that ‘one is not convinced that he really knows (by any sure instinct) how people’s voices would sound’,<sup>55</sup> it is worth wondering what he is complaining about. Pound finds ‘it often, though not universally, difficult to “hear” [James’s] characters speaking’.<sup>56</sup> Whilst we might question whether this should ever be writing’s primary aim, at least in the way Pound describes, ‘The Birthplace’ is nevertheless an interesting example because of its unusual depictions of stress.<sup>57</sup> Just after moving into the eponymous Birthplace with the aid of their friend Mr Grant-Jackson, the Gedges discuss their new profession as votaries of the shrine of The Great Man:

“What I can’t get over is its being such a man – !” He almost, from inward emotion, broke down.

“Such a man – ?”

“Him, *him*, HIM – !” It was too much.

“Grant-Jackson? Yes, it’s a surprise, but one sees how he has been meaning, all the while, the right thing by us.”

“I mean *Him*,” Gedge returned more coldly; “our becoming familiar and intimate – for that’s what it will come to. We shall just live with Him.” (CFHJ XXXII: 7)

Typographic variation (“Him, *him*, HIM”) conveys stress in an especially marked way, just as excessive as Morris Gedge’s hyperbolic veneration of The Great Man. At first, his wife is unable to discriminate between “Him, *him*, HIM” and Grant-Jackson, hence his subsequent combination of two stresses (“Him” and “*him*”) into “*Him*”, which maintains the kind of emphatic grandiloquence to which his

---

<sup>55</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘Henry James’, in *Instigations of Ezra Pound, Together with An Essay on the Chinese Written Character by Ernest Fenollosa* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920), pp. 106-67 (pp. 121-22).

<sup>56</sup> Pound is also alluding to those occasions when a character stops speaking and James inserts words of his own, *ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>57</sup> ‘The Birthplace’, in *The Jolly Corner and Other Tales 1903-1910*, ed. by N.H. Reeve, CFHJ, XXXII (2017), pp. 3-55.

wife was deaf. One way of hearing “Him, *him*, HIM” is as a crescendo, progressing from an unaccented noun, to a stressed one, and then a stressed one delivered at a particularly loud pitch or volume. However, because of the conventions of writing in English, it is hard to discern the varying shades of emphasis between “Him” at the start of the sentence and “Him” in the middle of one, an ambiguity peculiar to print. When Gedge starts to fear that all this bardolatry might be a confidence trick, that the fee-paying public are swallowing speculation dressed as fact, Mrs Gedge implores him to “Tell Them, *tell* Them” (*CFHJ* XXXII: 26). For the reader, almost every word in this utterance might suggest a minute variation of verbal stress (assuming that “Them” receives the same emphasis twice, which of course it need not). It is not clear whether the verb is capitalised for no reason other than it starts the sentence, or whether, like the other words, it should receive particular emphasis.

The various possibilities for voicing do much more than merely create confusion, either for Morris Gedge’s interlocutors or James’s readers. Nor do they simply stand as proof of James’s failure to negotiate the constraints of orthography in order to notate speech accurately. Many of the most significant tones in James’s writing are those that are not sounded but which nevertheless make some claim upon our hearing, moments where the potential emphasis is just as, if not more audible, than the actual one. One such moment occurs in *The Tragic Muse* (1890) when Lady Agnes speaks to her son, Nick Dormer, after the death of Sir Nicholas, his father. They discuss how he won his political ‘seat’ in the House of Commons. Nick has just confessed that the man who sits in the seat is not the same as the man who wins it, explaining this to his mother (who wishes him to pursue the same political career as his father).

“I went through it with great glee – I won’t deny that; it excited me, it interested me, it amused me. When once I was in it I liked it. But now that I’m out of it again –”

“Out of it?” His mother stared. “Isn’t the whole point that you’re in?”

“Ah now I’m only in the House of Commons.”

For an instant Lady Agnes seemed not to understand and to be on the point of laying her finger quickly to her lips with a “Hush!” as if the late Sir Nicholas



might have heard the “only.” Then, as if a comprehension of the young man’s words promptly superseded that impulse, she replied with force: “You will be in the Lords the day you determine to get there.” (*TM* I: 267-8)

Nick’s response asks us to hear at least two sounds simultaneously. If we hear the emphasis on “now”, he discriminates that one day he will be in the House of Lords. However, his mother’s terror arises from the momentary adoption of her late husband’s perspective, a perspective that might hear the stress fall on “only”, thereby diminishing his life’s work. The *New York Edition* italicises “now” in order to clarify this conflict of tone (*NYE* VII: 244). Either of these two stresses also discriminates against the possible stress on “in” (“in the House of Commons”) since Nick has just been stressing that he has fallen “out” of love with political careerism, despite being “in” his seat. In this way, James’s dialogues allow us to hear many, often mutually conflicting, tones of voice simultaneously.

In ‘The Speech of American Women’, James agrees with his female interlocutor that the parts into which the novel necessarily divides speech are

“theoretically, *all* sounded. The integrity of romance requires them without exception. And what are novels but the lesson of life? The retention of the covenanted parts is their absolute basis, without which they wouldn’t for a moment hang together.” (*HJC*: 77)

This covenant grants the novel an especially privileged role in safeguarding the highest tone standard to the last syllable, as well as being responsible for fiction’s own structural integrity. But whilst intonation and its parts might be ‘*all* sounded’ in James’s fiction, reading requires its own dramas of discrimination whereby we decide which tones are more plausible than others. Moreover, many of the utterances upon which entire novels of James appear to depend are those in which vocal cues are not only mutually conflicting but conspicuously withheld. Phrases such as those which conclude two major novels: “[t]hen there we are” (*CFHJ* XVIII: 395) or “[w]e shall never be again as we were” (*WD*: 576) are not only semantically

impoverished, but provide little accompanying information about their tone. The same is true of many of the late dialogues, which possess a rhythm where the same words are repeated back and forth between interlocutors with no information provided as to the nature of their voicing, such as Maggie's famous repetition of "for love" (*GB*: 371), or her stichomythic exchanges with Fanny Assingham (*GB*: 524-25). Such utterances gain their dramatic intensity because rather than in spite of the fact we are 'denied the expressive timbre and intonation of the human voice', as David Lodge notes.<sup>58</sup>

The essential deprivations of print facilitate a particular kind of imaginative pleasure, and this is particularly clear when it comes to the punctuation of James's late prose, especially in novels such as *The Golden Bowl* where the revisions might be conceived as marginal because of the historical proximity of the first edition to the *New York Edition*. We know James was acutely aware of the expressive potential of withholding as well as providing cues for tone, of the rich pertinences afforded by not only the 'shade of a cadence of a position of a comma' (*LC2*: 1338) but also 'more essentially, no-comma'.<sup>59</sup> Needless to say, James's protest to Scribner's against their addition of so-called 'death-dealing commas' in his letter of 12 May 1906 (*LL*: 433) can hardly be understood to represent a *categorical* rationale (there are many instances where sentences already possess the aesthetic of the 'no-comma' before revision, as well as sentences after revision that contain an excess of commas

---

<sup>58</sup> David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction* (London: Vintage, 2011), p. 172.

<sup>59</sup> James is here writing to Martin Secker on 11 September 1914 on the need for the Uniform Edition of his tales to 'conform literatim and punctuatim to the [*NYE*] text. It is vital that he adhere to that authentic punctuation – to the last comma or rather, more essentially, no-comma', cited in Leon Edel and Dan H. Lawrence, *A Bibliography of Henry James*, 3rd edn, rev. with the assistance of James Rambeau (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 155, cited in Philip Horne, *Henry James and Revision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 320-21.

that we might expect to be removed).<sup>60</sup> A comma does not straightforwardly map onto a pause either, and punctuation might more accurately be understood as that which ‘calibrates the correspondences between perception and respiration, the junctures between ocular saccades, and the varying speeds of the assimilative process of the senses’.<sup>61</sup> However, in James, this is not simply proof of, say, a move from chronology towards a proto-modernist simultaneity.<sup>62</sup> Instead, the removal of such cues signals an increased freedom for the reader, permitted to consider the multiple lives a tone might lend a line.

Sometimes these revisions in punctuation effect local, minute, and nearly imperceptible, alterations in sense. When Adam Verver says to Charlotte that: “[o]h, I’ll pay, with pleasure, anything back for you” (*GB*: 167), this is revised to: “[o]h I’ll pay with pleasure anything back for you” (*NYE* XXIII: 235). The first edition implies that he can pay, and pay with pleasure, where ‘pleasure’ functions adverbially. However, the revision implies that he might pay with pleasure itself, so that pleasure operates as a noun. By taking commas out, previously subordinated parts of syntax enter into relations of potential equivalence. When Charlotte says to the Prince that they are “safe” because the others are too, she says that: “[w]e hang, essentially, together” (*GB*: 244), it is revised to “[w]e hang essentially

---

<sup>60</sup> See for instance, the following passage which remains unpunctuated in *both* 1905 and 1909 editions: ‘he should belie himself by completing without a touch at least of the majesty of delay a moment to the religion he wished to propagate (*GB*: 102; *NYE* XXIII: 145-6). Equally, sentences in the 1909 text occasionally preserve the commas frequently removed from the 1905 edition: ‘[s]he wanted the whole picture from her, as she had wanted it from her companion, and, promptly, in Eaton Square, whither, without the Prince, she repaired almost ostentatiously for the purpose, this purpose only, she brought her repeatedly back to the subject, both in her husband’s presence and during several scraps of independent colloquy’ (*NYE* XXIV: 30). This only change is to: ‘she repaired, almost ostentatiously, this purpose only’ (*GB*: 308).

<sup>61</sup> Clive Scott, *Street Photography: From Atget to Cartier-Bresson* (London: I.B. Tauris and Co., 2007), p. 40.

<sup>62</sup> ‘Without punctuation, the voice loses these vocal reference points and as it were floats free of the text, becomes a set of multi-vocal potentialities, unanchored in the text (vocal elasticity)’, Clive Scott, ‘Blaise Cendrars’, in *Twentieth-Century French Poetry: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Hugues Azérad, Peter Collier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 53-60 (p. 58).

together” (NYE XXIII: 343). “Essentially”, because of the stress it receives in the first instance, is argumentative, as if to say: “[e]ssentially, we hang together.” However, in the second instance, the removal of stress suggests something more substantive, that they hang essentially together, as though “essentially” described the manner of their relation.<sup>63</sup>

At the end of this novel, the various possibilities for voicing afforded by removing commas become especially marked. Just after the Prince says “[s]ee”, I see nothing but *you*”, the first published English edition of the novel reads as follows:

And the truth of it had, with this force, after a moment, so strangely lighted his eyes that, as for pity and dread of them, she buried her own in his breast. (GB: 548)

However, when James revised it, it read very differently:

And the truth of it had with this force after a moment so strangely lighted his eyes that as for pity and dread of them she buried her own in his breast. (NYE XXIV: 369)

It is hard to explain away these differences according to anything resembling paraphraseable sense. Rather, the change in rhythm affects the pace and movement of the line in ways that operate at the threshold of conscious attention. By placing ‘with this force’ and ‘after a moment’ in succeeding subordinate clauses, the first edition patiently pulls out its sense with revelatory caveat after caveat. Coming as it does at the end of the novel, this rhythm of postponement gains especial dramatic force, since what is being deferred is not just the end of the sentence but the end of the whole book. Rather than creating uncertainty, the removal of punctuation allows the forcefulness of truth to gain renewed purchase. What might previously be a

---

<sup>63</sup> For a recent account of James’s punctuation, see Robin Vella Riehl, ‘James and the “No-Comma”’: Punctuation and Authority in “Daisy Miller”, *HJR*, 35 (2014), 69-75.

tentative and careful unravelling of veracity is transformed, with startling confidence, into a single and complete unit of thought at the same time as it allows breathing space for a variety of possible stresses. Intonation eschews such ‘careless habits of accuracy’<sup>64</sup> as a result of the necessarily equivocal status of intonation in James’s writing, equivocal in the etymological sense of having more than one possible voicing.

### 0.3 Contradictions on the Tongue

Eric Griffiths’s *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry* (1989) is still one of the most extensive account of these issues concerning the voice and its relation to print available, and it is worth briefly restating some key elements of his argument and the questions it raises. For Griffiths, print will never give ‘conclusive evidence of a voice’, and whilst this might make some doubt ‘what we hear in writing’, it also provides an ‘essential pleasure’; reading is ‘an activity of imagination which is delicately and thoroughly reciprocal’ between writing and speech, between ‘the actualities and ideals of utterance’.<sup>65</sup> The printed voice claims a simultaneity to which spoken utterance cannot have access: a ‘double existence in time [...] at once speech and text’.<sup>66</sup> Griffiths figures this simultaneity as contrapuntal: the ‘intonational ambiguity of a written text may create a mute polyphony through which we see rather than hear alternatively possible voicings, and are led by such vision to reflect on the inter-resonance of those voicings’.<sup>67</sup> This ‘mute polyphony’ reveals one of Griffiths’s central insights that phonology is inseparable from any act of reading, no matter how putatively ‘silent’; the ‘meaning of words on the page does not declare itself, nor is it separable from features of voicing’.<sup>68</sup> Intonation is as inevitable as reading.

---

<sup>64</sup> Oscar Wilde, ‘The Decay of Lying’ (1891), in *Oscar Wilde: The Major Works*, ed. by Isobel Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989; repr. 2000), pp. 215–40 (p. 218).

<sup>65</sup> Griffiths, *Printed*, pp. 12, 220.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 240.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.

Griffiths describes the ‘contained ambiguity’ which, in *In Memoriam*, makes us feel how ‘possibilities’ of voicing ‘do not alternate, they co-exist’, as opposed to ‘registering the occurrence of distinct sensations’.<sup>69</sup> This difference between ‘coexistence’ and ‘alternation’, between the printed and the spoken voice, means that, unlike a poem’s double existence, ‘some set of the possible vocal alternatives must eventually be chosen’ in speech.<sup>70</sup> Such divergences would induce a Tennysonian ‘contradiction on the tongue’ if spoken,<sup>71</sup> but ‘the eye can still see the conjunction of meanings in the written words’, even if the voice cannot utter them. This metaphysics of ‘double existence’ means that, in print, you can have things, ‘vocally, both ways at once’.<sup>72</sup>

This position accords with the ‘canonical’ entry for ‘Performance’ in the *Princeton Encyclopaedia* (1993), which draws on Seymour Chatman’s claim that ‘in performance, all ambiguities have to be resolved before or during delivery. Since the nature of performance is linear and temporal, sentences can only be read aloud once and must be given a specific intonation pattern’.<sup>73</sup> Assuming that we cannot *say* two conflicting tones at the same time (although linguists have recently sought to

---

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>71</sup> *In Memoriam*, CXXV (ll.4), in *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, ed. by Christopher Ricks (London: Longman, 1969; repr. 2007), p. 471. Cited by Griffiths, *Printed*, p. 98.

<sup>72</sup> Griffiths, *Printed*, p. 98.

<sup>73</sup> *The Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms: Third Edition*, ed. by Roland Greene, Stephen Cushman (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016), p. 247.

challenge this assumption),<sup>74</sup> neither Chatman nor Griffiths explain why we should be able to hear two tones simultaneously in print. This is especially true if phonology is as inseparable from reading as Griffiths suggests, and so ‘muteness’ might not therefore be the best way to account for the ‘polyphony’ of Griffiths’s printed voice. For this reason, recent critics have suggested that within Griffiths’s entire project ‘lies (however tacitly) an entire metaphysics of *aisthesis*’, which overlooks the ‘muteness always registered in the lungs, throat and mouth as well as the eye’.<sup>75</sup>

The advantages and richness of Griffiths’s approach are readily apparent, and this thesis depends and builds upon its insights and approach. However, part of the uniqueness of James’s contribution to this debate is that the ability to hear two or more tones at once is just as often a feature of *spoken* as written utterance. Moreover, as Chapter 2 will show, the contrastive discriminations of stress mean that, whilst it might not be possible to say something in two ways at once, it *is* possible to hear it in two ways. Griffiths’s project is necessarily delimited for the more obvious reason that it is concerned with the printed voice of Victorian *poetry*, even when many of those poets were themselves hugely influential for James (Tennyson and Robert Browning above all). Griffiths’s work is also centrally informed by poets who came after as well as before James, most notably T.S. Eliot, whose observation of the

---

<sup>74</sup> Reuven Tsur questions this assumption that the spoken performance of verse is unable to convey two conflicting tones simultaneously, a ‘hypothesis’ that might appear at first counterintuitive, or at least anomalous ‘if simply because we have only one voice’. Tsur notes the many occasions where performers achieve ‘a mission impossible’, communicating both continuity and discontinuity when reading enjambment, for instance, because a conflict of metrical and syntactical cues can be suggested by reading without a pause and a falling intonation contour, ‘A Conversation with Reuven Tsur on Intonation and Prosody’, *Thinking Verse*, 5 (2015), 172-212 (196). This draws on the debates surrounding the intonational fallacy between Katharine Loesch and Seymour Chatman, the former proposing non-disambiguating intonation contours for conflicting intonations, namely for performances capable of conveying competing interpretations of stress. See Katharine T. Loesch, ‘Literary Ambiguity and Oral Performance’, *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 51.3 (1965), 258–67; ‘Reply to Mr Chatman’, *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 52.3 (1966), 286–89.

<sup>75</sup> David Nowell Smith, *On Voice in Poetry*, pp. 77-78.

indefinable congruity between writing and speech is the mark of a good writer.<sup>76</sup>

However, if Griffiths's argument has its basis in Eliot, Eliot's has its basis in James:

The spoken and the written language must not be too near together, as they must not be too far apart. Henry James's later style, for instance, is not exactly a conversational style; it is the way in which the later Henry James dictated to a secretary [...] There is, however, an essential connexion between the written and the spoken word [...] and I have found this intimate, though indefinable connexion between the speech and the writing of every writer whom I have known personally who was a good writer.<sup>77</sup>

This thesis develops this line of influence of James upon Griffiths *via* Eliot's account of the indefinable congruity between writing and speech in James's late style. Eliot understands the connection between writing and speech as an 'essential' aspect of style, one confirmed by, but not dependent upon, James's own dictation. Eliot was not alone in this identification: as early as 1907 H.G. Dwight, responsible for a significant portion of James's early reception in America,<sup>78</sup> describes the 'conscious approximation to the spoken word' in James's writing,<sup>79</sup> and concludes that the 'later manner of Mr James is more than anything else a speaking manner' whose peculiarity arises from the fact it exists in print. Eliot's 'indefinable connexion' is developed further in the first of his two essays on 'Milton' (1936), which, by contrasting the verse texture of Book V of *Paradise Lost* and the prose style of James's unfinished novel, *The Ivory Tower* (1917), argues the following:

---

<sup>76</sup> Eric Griffiths, 'Writing and Speaking: The Work of Eliot, Yeats and Pound' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 1980).

<sup>77</sup> T.S. Eliot, 'Charles Whibley' (1931), in *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1932), pp. 454-68 (p. 459).

<sup>78</sup> See Ross Posnock, *The Trial of Curiosity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 142.

<sup>79</sup> H.G. Dwight, from 'Henry James – "in his own country"', in *Putnam's Monthly*, 2 (1907), 164-70; 433-42, in *Henry James: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Roger Gard (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1968), pp. 432-49 (p. 443). Dwight continues: '[t]he clauses, the parentheses, the intonations of daily life are of course familiar enough to our ears; but they have a strangeness for eyes accustomed to the telegraphic brevity of the newspaper', *ibid.*, p. 444.



But a tortuous style, when its peculiarity is aimed at precision (as with Henry James), is not necessarily a dead one; only when the complication is dictated by a demand of verbal music, instead of by any demand of sense [...] The sound, of course, is never irrelevant, and the style of James certainly depends for its effect a good deal on the sound of the voice, James's own, painfully explaining. But the complication, with James, is due to a determination not to simplify, and in that simplification lose any of the real intricacies and by-paths of mental movement; whereas the complication of a Miltonic sentence is an active complication, a complication deliberately introduced into what was a previously simplified and abstract thought. [...] I am not suggesting that Milton has no idea to convey which he regards as important: only that the syntax is determined by the musical significance, by the auditory imagination, rather than by the attempt to follow actual speech or thought.<sup>80</sup>

Milton's complication is only added after the fact, since the thoughts are themselves 'previously simplified and abstract'. By contrast, James's complication is produced by the nature of the ideas themselves. Consequently, Milton's syntax is determined by the 'auditory imagination', but where music and thought remain categorically distinct: 'the sensuous effect of these verses is entirely on the ear, and is joined to the concepts'.<sup>81</sup> But even in James, music is for Eliot only ever the effect, and never the cause, of thinking. Rather than demonstrating an achieved fidelity to thought, the music of James's prose might already be a form of thinking, rather than something that happens after thought has already occurred. This would be closer to Griffiths's understanding of the 'printed voice' than Eliot's 'indefinable congruity': 'Tennyson thought *in melody*'.<sup>82</sup> It is also much closer to *William James's* understanding of 'the

---

<sup>80</sup> T.S. Eliot, 'Milton I', in *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), pp. 138-45 (p. 141-2). Eliot claims the 'quotation', '[h]owever, he didn't mind [...] hats' (*IT*: 264), is 'taken almost at random from *The Ivory Tower*', *ibid.*, p. 141; William Empson cites the same passage as a 'convoluted' and 'particularly tiresome sentence', *Milton's God* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), p. 27.

<sup>81</sup> T.S. Eliot, 'Milton I', p. 140. T.S. Eliot first used the 'auditory imagination' positively to describe a quality inaccessible to Matthew Arnold's verse: '[w]hat I call the "auditory imagination" is the "feeling for syllable and rhythm, penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling", "Matthew Arnold", in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism: Studies in The Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: 1933; repr. 1966), pp. 95-113 (p. 111).

<sup>82</sup> Griffiths, *Printed*, p. 101.

auditory imagination' in *The Principles of Psychology*, 'whereby', he says, quoting from Alfred Binet's *Psychologie du Raisonnement* (1886), we 'reason, as well as remember, by ear' (cited in *Principles* II: 60). This thesis will argue that Henry James's formulation of the 'auditive intelligence' represents a historically saturated concept that emerges from a sense that intonation is a mode in which intelligence operates.

For T.S. Eliot, James possessed 'a vision so exacting, that it was forced to the extreme of care and punctiliousness for exact expression'.<sup>83</sup> This 'care' for 'exact expression' rejects the notion that character is the only way to 'grasp at reality', but also denies that James does anything so straightforward as 'provide us with "ideas"', echoing Eliot's well-known pronouncement that James 'had a mind so fine that no idea could violate it'.<sup>84</sup> But, as with Gass's praise of James's care for the 'sounds of words', this 'care' for 'exact expression' might also sound like a preoccupation normally reserved for poetry (indeed for a poet such as Eliot).<sup>85</sup> Whilst this thesis will allude to the ways in which James's understanding of intonation learns much from nineteenth-century poetry, one of the implications of a 'care for tone' is the possibility that prose might possess the kind of prosodic intelligence normally reserved for verse.

---

<sup>83</sup> 'A Prediction in Regard to Three English Authors: 1 Writers Who, Though Masters of Thought, are Likewise Masters of Art', *Vanity Fair*, 21.6 (1924), 29, 98, in *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*, ed. by Ronald Schuchard, 8 vols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014-2015), II: *The Perfect Critic*, ed. by Anthony Cuda, and Ronald Schuchard (2014), pp. 513-20 (p. 514).

<sup>84</sup> 'In Memory of Henry James' (1918), in *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot*, I, pp. 648-52 (p. 650).

<sup>85</sup> See for instance Richard Cureton *Rhythmic Phrasing in English Verse* (London: Longman, 1992); David Crystal, 'Intonation and Metrical Theory', *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 70.1 (1971), 1-33; Alan Holder, *Rethinking Meter: A New Approach to the Verse Line* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1995); John R. Cooper, 'Intonation and Iambic Pentameter', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 33.4 (1997), 392-421. For intonation in free verse, see G. Burns Cooper, *Mysterious Music: Rhythm and Free Verse* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Clive Scott, *Vers libre: The Emergence of Free verse in France, 1886-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); Natalie Gerber, 'Intonation and the Conventions of Free Verse', *Style*, 49.1 (2015), 8-34.

When James recalls Flaubert's reading of a poem by Théophile Gautier aloud in his 1902 'Introduction' to *Madame Bovary*, reprinted in *Notes on Novelists* (1914), he says that he was never able to find the poem in question; '[b]ut for the rhyme', there is a distinct possibility, James notes, that Flaubert might have been 'spouting to me something strange and sonorous of his own' (LC2: 320). One result of not knowing the work's name is that Flaubert's 'large utterance' becomes all the more conspicuous, allowing his 'own full tone, which was the note of the occasion, to linger the more unquenched' (LC2: 320). In a passage added in the 1914 text, James writes that '[v]erse, I felt, we had always with us, and almost any idiot of goodwill could give it a value' (LC2: 320), but the value of 'so many a passage of "Salambo" and of "L'Éducation"' was on the other hand exactly such as gained when he allowed himself, as had by the legend ever been frequent *dans l'intimité*, to "bellow" it to its fullest effect' (LC2: 320).<sup>86</sup> The claim that '[v]erse, I felt, we had always with us', echoes Flaubert's own that '[a]ll possible prosodic variations have been discovered; but that is far from being the case with prose.'<sup>87</sup> The relative neglect of the subject of intonation in James is thus in many ways unsurprising, because it is a symptom of the very problem he was trying to diagnose. Using contributions from the field of poetics to argue for the importance of intonation in his work will not therefore make a case for James *as* a poet, irrespective of how capaciously he himself uses this term.<sup>88</sup> It will (it must), however, make a case for concerns normally reserved for the domain of 'poetics'. Flaubert's high estimation of prose as the more difficult art than verse, involving 'more maddening problems and subtler rhythms' (LC2: 303), supports James's own aspirations for the novel, and prevents the admiration of prose

---

<sup>86</sup> This is added to the 1902 text, Henry James, 'Introduction' to *Madame Bovary*, p. xii.

<sup>87</sup> Gustave Flaubert to Louise Colet, 24 April 1852, in *The Letters of Gustave Flaubert: 1830-1857*, ed. and trans. by Francis Steegmuller, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), I, p. 158. For the original, see Gustave Flaubert, *Gustave Flaubert: Correspondance*, ed. by Jean Bruneau, 5 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1973-2007), II, (2007), p. 79.

<sup>88</sup> The title of 'the poet' is for James 'the only title of *general* application and convenience for those who passionately cultivate the image of life and the art, on the whole so beneficial, of projecting it' (LC2: 1333).

from the perspective of a proud sibling, ‘the “proud sister” attitude of verse’ (*LC2*: 304).<sup>89</sup> To care for tone is to exercise such self-consciousness without succumbing to the problems of the Flaubertian ‘religion of rhythm’, departing from the attitude to prose described in James’s response to Walter Besant’s ‘The Art of Fiction’ (1884): the ‘comfortable, good-humoured feeling abroad that a novel is a novel, as a pudding is a pudding, and that our only business with it could be to swallow it’ (*LC1*: 44).

#### 0.4 The Despotism of the Eye

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the field of James studies has tended to emphasise the visual over the auditory.<sup>90</sup> Given the amount James wrote on the visual arts, this is perhaps unsurprising, and is consistent with the trend of nineteenth-century scholarship more generally.<sup>91</sup> However, James also refuses to

---

<sup>89</sup> ‘James remains faithful to the view’, Peter Brooks argues, ‘that the English and American novel had not really come of age, that it was still too much an entertainment for middle-class maidens, weakened by auto-censorship and a lack of self-consciousness concerning the novel as an artistic form’, ‘The Turn of the American’, in *New Essays on ‘The American’*, ed. by Martha Banta (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 43-68 (pp. 47-48). Peter Brooks reiterates this point in *Henry James Goes to Paris* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), p. 59. For the role of this ‘Preface’ in making the novel ‘an object of critical attention’, see Richard Brodhead *The School of Hawthorne* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 169.

<sup>90</sup> Hazel Hutchison notes that, in comparison with senses of touch (as well as vision), ‘explorations of James’s sense of sound are fewer’, “‘An Embroidered Veil of Sound’: The Word in the Machine in Henry James’s *In the Cage*”, *HJR*, 34 (2013), 147-62 (156). Examples of such visual studies include Susan M. Griffin, *The Historical Eye: The Texture of the Visual in Late James* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991); Viola Hopkins Winner, *Henry James and the Visual Arts* (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 1970); Kendall Johnson, *Henry James and the Visual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>91</sup> See for instance Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990); James Krasner, *The Entangled Eye: Visual Perception and the Representation of Nature in Post-Darwinian Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Carol T. Christ and John O. Jordan, eds, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

admit the priority, or ‘despotism’, of the eye (to adapt Coleridge’s formulation).<sup>92</sup>

Chapter 1 outlines one historical instantiation of this, namely the theatrical vogue of pictorialism. Equally significant however were the debates occurring in French literary circles in the 1880’s regarding whether or not prose primarily addresses the eye or the ear, debates that James followed closely.

In the ‘Preface’ to *The Golden Bowl* (granted an especially privileged role by virtue of being the final ‘Preface’ in the *New York Edition* and the one that reflects most upon the practice of revision itself), James refers to the ‘queer thesis’ mistakenly held by those who insist upon ‘the soundless, the “quiet” reading’ and believe that prose does not have to be read aloud (*LC2*: 1339). The ‘queer thesis’ might allude to a general position adopted by the public, but it might also refer to an exchange between Gautier and Flaubert as recorded in the Gouncourt’s *Journal*, as summarised by James’s review, first published in the *Fortnightly Review* (October 1888), then reprinted in *Essays in London and Elsewhere* (1893).<sup>93</sup> Of the many ‘lights’ cast ‘upon Flaubert’s conversation’ in the *Journal*, ‘one of the most interesting’ is his statement made upon completing a new book:

“It is finished; I have a dozen more pages to write, but I have the fall of every phrase.” Flaubert had the religion of rhythm, and when he had caught the final cadence of each sentence – something that might correspond, in prose, to the rhyme – he filled in the beginning and the middle. But Gautier makes the distinction that his rhythms were addressed above all to the ear (they were “mouthers,” as the author of “Le Capitaine Fracasse” happily says); whereas those he himself sought were ocular, not intended to be read aloud. (*LC2*: 423)

---

<sup>92</sup> ‘To emancipate the mind from the despotism of the eye is the first step towards its emancipation from the influences and intrusions of the senses, sensations, and passions generally’, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Logic*, in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by James Robert de Jager Jackson, 16 vols (London and Princeton: Routledge and Kegan Paul and Princeton University Press, 1971-2001), XIII (1981), pp. 242-43.

<sup>93</sup> Henry James, review of *The Journal of the Brothers de Goncourt* (1888), in *LC2*, pp. 404-28.

Flaubert's religion of rhythm is such that the *consummatum est* of the work ("it is finished"; "[c]'est fini")<sup>94</sup> depends upon the contour rather than the content of his sentences. The 'harmonious *chutes de phrase*' (LC2: 310) are subsequently alluded to in James's 1902 'Introduction' to *Madame Bovary*, reprinted in *Notes on Novelists* (1914). Flaubert has the intonation of his sentence *before* the words themselves, and only afterwards do the words fill this rhythmical shape. This kind of thinking in cadences, as opposed to thinking in syntax, is here understood as the prose equivalent to rhyme, where rhyme is conceived of as a compositional resource rather than an ornament to thinking.

Gautier contrastingly advocates an 'ocular' rhythm or '*rhythme oculaire*', since for him novels are not meant to be read aloud, and thus to agonise over the sound of a double genitive in *Madame Bovary* ('[u]ne couronne de fleurs d'oranger') is to perversely concern oneself with rhythms few will ever notice.<sup>95</sup> However, for James, the Goncourts' prose tends so far to the pictorial that the 'reader of their novels will perceive that harmonies and cadences are nothing to them, and that their rhythms are, with a few rare exceptions, neither to be sounded nor to be seen' (LC2: 423). Their rhythms are neither rhythms of the eye (Gautier) nor rhythms of the ear (Flaubert). *Madame Gervaisais* is an artistic failure because it remains on the 'purely pictorial plane of the demonstration' (LC: 425). When the authors want to show the 'great spiritual change' of their heroine 'from skepticism to Catholicism', they do so by a 'wonderful description of the confessional, at the Gesù, to which she goes for the first time to kneel' (LC2: 425). After citing a passage describing their stay in Auvergne in 1867, James describes how its success is 'greatest for those readers who are submissive to description and even to enumeration' (LC1: 426), for those readers who 'like to "see" as they read' (LC2: 427):

---

<sup>94</sup> Edmund and Jules de Goncourt, *Journal de Goncourt: Mémoires de la vie Littéraire*, 9 vols (Paris: G. Charpentier and E. Fasquelle, 1888-1896), II (1888), p. 14.

<sup>95</sup> 'Un livre n'est pas fait pour être lu à haute voix', in *ibid.*

In “Madame Gervaisais,” for example, a picture of the visible, sketchable Rome of twenty-five years ago, we seem to hear the voice forced to sing in a register to which it doesn’t belong, or rather (the comparison is more complete) to attempt effects of sound that are essentially not vocal. The novelist competes with the painter and the painter with the novelist, in the treatment of the aspect and figure of things; but what a happy tact each of them needs to keep his course straight, without poaching on the other’s preserves! In England it is the painter who is apt to poach most, and in France it is the writer. However this may be, no one probably has poached more than have MM. de Goncourt. (LC2: 412)

James’s charge most obviously refers to challenges of vocalisation; a ‘page of “Madame Gervaisais,” for instance, is an almost impossible thing to read aloud’ (LC2: 423). In the passage containing the ‘wonderful description of the confessional’ (LC2: 425-6), the alliterative excess and the pairing of vowels in phrases such as ‘avec l’ombre de la chaire sur son bois brun’<sup>96</sup> – ‘with the shadow of the choir upon its brown wood’ (LC2: 425) – demonstrates the particular demands this novel makes of the voice. To avoid such phrases, prose should not be ‘skimmed and scanted, shuffled and mumbled’ (LC2: 1339). Prose always ‘demands the right to be heard’, thus offering an alternative to the ‘eye-dominated attention’ with which it is ‘usually skim-read’, in Adam Piette’s words.<sup>97</sup>

The ‘visible, sketchable Rome of twenty-five years ago’ presumably alludes to James’s own account of his visit to the Gesù on 31 January 1873, ‘sketchable’ in the sense that his impression of the ‘great *mise-en scène*’ was collected in the volume

---

<sup>96</sup> Edmond et Jules de Goncourt, *Madame Gervaisais* (Paris: Librairie Internationale, 1869), pp. 229. Similar phrases which resist reading aloud occur just before the extract cited by James: ‘longs dans leurs robes longues’, whilst immediately afterwards, we find ‘marines mangées de mousse’, or, ‘massant ses minceurs, serré, sombre et sourd’, *ibid.*, pp. 228, 231.

<sup>97</sup> Adam Piette, *Remembering and the Sound of Words: Mallarmé, Proust, Joyce, Beckett* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 16. Ernest Legouvé similarly records Sainte-Beuve’s claim that the ‘eye runs over the page, skips tedious bits, glides over dangerous spots! But the ear hears every thing! The ear makes no cuts! The ear is delicate, sensitive, and clairvoyant to a degree inconceivable by the eye. A word which, glanced at, passed unnoticed, assumes vast proportions when read aloud’, *Reading as a Fine Art*, trans. by Abby Langdon Alger (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1879), p. 65. James described Legouvé as the ‘prince of *conférenciers*’, ‘Parisian Topics’ (1876), in *CWAD2*, pp. 142-45 (p. 143).

entitled *Transatlantic Sketches* (TS: 173-4). However, this was fifteen, rather than twenty-five, years ago,<sup>98</sup> and so it is also possible that James is thinking of Hawthorne's description, in 1858, of the church, which is somewhat closer in dating (thirty years):

[W]e determined to go to the picture-gallery of the Capitol, and on our way thither we stepped into Il Gesù, the grand and rich church of the Jesuits, where we found a priest in white preaching a sermon with vast earnestness of action and variety of tone, insomuch that I fancied sometimes that two priests were in the agony of sermonising at once.<sup>99</sup>

James would have been familiar with this passage, having reviewed the work in 1872, claiming that it 'is in his occasional *sketches* of persons – often notabilities – whom he meets that his perception seems finest and firmest' (LCI: 312 emphasis added). Such 'sketches', however, should never forgo their representational medium in their attempt to 'compete' with the painter, recalling James's description of the manner in which the novelist 'competes with his brother the painter in *his* attempt to render the look of things in 'The Art of Fiction' (1884), reprinted in *Essays in London and Elsewhere* (1893). To fight this battle on the painter's terms is to lose twice: 'if you wish to compete with the painter prose is a roundabout vehicle, and it

---

<sup>98</sup> In 'A Roman Holiday' (1873), reprinted in 1875, James also describes the contadini sleeping under the shadow of a 'departing monk' under the campanile of San Giovanni e Paolo in Rome, and that there you will 'not find anything in Rome more *sketchable*' (TS: 122).

<sup>99</sup> Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Passages from the French and Italian Note-Books of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, 2 vols (London: Strahan and Co., 1871), I, p. 134. John Ruskin's diary entry for the 31 December, 1840 also notes the 'power of tone' played by three organs in this church, whilst the 'congregation – if it may be so called – were crushing into the church' and 'not one of them seeming to have the slightest feeling of the sound about them', *The Diaries of John Ruskin*, ed. by Joan Evans and John Howard Whitehouse, 1835-1847 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), pp. 130-31. The Bishop in Robert Browning's 'The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St Praxed's Church' (1845) compares his planned tomb with the monument to St Ignatius Loyola, also in the 'Jesu church so gay' (ll.46), *Browning: Selected Poems*, ed. by John Woolford, Daniel Karlin, and Joseph Phelan (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 249.



is simpler to adopt the painter's tools' (*LC2*: 427), not least when there was such a precedent of writers observing the acoustic quality of space in Il Gesu.

This is not to suggest that James sought to do away with the eye entirely, or that he merely puts the ear in its place. James will be shown to be deeply invested in those moments where the eye and the ear overlap or become mutually informing, where we might *hear* a gesture or facial expression on stage ('Coquelin' (1915): 543),<sup>100</sup> where the voice becomes visible (George du Maurier 'almost *saw* the voice' (*LC1*: 891-92)), or where the effect of paintings resemble 'some complicated sound' (*SBOC*: 274-75). These synesthetic formulations are all more persuasive for the way they catch our attention and resist straightforward elucidation. Glossing Robert Frost's phrase, 'the imagination of the ear', Angela Leighton has recently puzzled over the contradictoriness of the endeavour of hearing as we read: the 'implied clash of registers between image and sound, sight and hearing, also gives pause, asks us to take breath, while calling attention to a juxtaposition which will not naturalize instantly but jars with novelty and surprise'.<sup>101</sup> As she suggests, the phrase reminds us 'not only that the ear must work to hear inaudible print, but also that it must imagine the intonations of what it reads, and thus be already interpreting the imagination of hearing'.<sup>102</sup> This last phrase, 'the imagination of hearing', deftly captures the sense that we both imagine the tones we hear and that hearing might itself be imaginative in nature, that sound is a medium in which imagination occurs. 'The auditive intelligence' captures precisely this kind of evocative antithesis.

## 0.5 The Aim and Scope of this Thesis

Sound underwent enormous technological development in the nineteenth century. As Steven Connor writes, the period 'saw an energetic revival of schemes for the

---

<sup>100</sup> This thesis differentiates between the two versions of the Coquelin essay (1885/1915) in this way. This departs from the usual practice of referring to the essays in *CWAD2* by referring to the volume only, after the first reference.

<sup>101</sup> Angela Leighton, *Hearing Things: The Work of Sound in Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), p. 6.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

systematic representation of sound, encouraged by German historical and comparative phonology', and the phonograph 'came as the culmination of a range of different attempts through the nineteenth century to formalize and control sound'.<sup>103</sup> This was the age that saw – or heard – 'the electric telegraph and the microphone, the telephone and the phonograph, technical apparatuses such as Hermann von Helmholtz's vowel resonators and John Tyndall's singing flames, and specialized shorthand systems like Isaac Pitman's phonography and Alexander Melville Bell's Visible Speech'.<sup>104</sup> Drawing on Raymond Schafer's influential formulation of the 'soundscape', defined as 'any portion of the sonic environment regarded as a field for study',<sup>105</sup> John Picker's *Victorian Soundscapes* argues that the advances in technology in the nineteenth century initiated a fundamental epistemological break: '[u]ndeterred by such risks from their desire to listen and hear, Victorians in their scientific and technological discoveries and literary innovations went a long way toward dispelling, or at least redefining, the mysteries of hearing and sound.'<sup>106</sup> The Victorians, he continues, 'sought to transform what Romantics had conceived of as a sublime *experience* into a quantifiable and marketable *object* or *thing*, a sonic commodity'.<sup>107</sup>

For James scholars, research into the technologies of listening enables a recognition of the ways in which 'intimacy comes to be mediated through tele-technology around the turn of the century'.<sup>108</sup> The concept of 'mediation' is central

---

<sup>103</sup> Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 347; cited in John M. Picker, *Victorian Soundscapes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 154 n.25.

<sup>104</sup> Picker, p. 10. Helmholtz's research meant that 'sound began to assume the status as ideal function that sight had earlier held', see Gillian Beer, 'Authentic Tidings of Invisible Things', in *Vision in Context: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Sight*, ed. by Teresa Brennan and Martin Jay (New York: Routledge, 1966), pp. 83-100 (p. 91).

<sup>105</sup> R. Murray Schafer, *The Tuning of the World* (New York: Knopf, 1977), reprinted as *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, VT: Destiny, 1994), p. 274.

<sup>106</sup> Picker, p. 10.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Pamela Thurschwell, 'Henry James and Theodora Bosanquet: On the typewriter, *In the Cage*, at the Ouija board', *Textual Practice*, 13 (1999), 5-23 (5).

here, particularly when considering the role of James's typist, or the telegraphist in *In the Cage*, 'mediators' both and alive to the 'potential pleasures and dangers of carrying the words of others'.<sup>109</sup> This shares much with the recent approach adopted by historical poetics: Yopie Prins draws our attention to the interaction between poetic recitation and the phonograph, stressing '[n]ot the immediacy of Browning's voice, but its mechanical mediation'.<sup>110</sup> Setting aside the risk of translating local effects of style into broader units of cultural exchange, where tone is 'explained' or made legible by historical conditions, the danger in pursuing 'mediation' for its own sake is that it propagates the assumption that history could operate as a methodological principle, that by 'adding' the mediations of sound to our understanding of James's writing research will thereby become 'more' historical in the process.

Another way of saying this is that it is all too easy to overstate the role of dictation in James's later style.<sup>111</sup> The question of dictation is itself a greatly complicated one, not just because James himself subsequently revised the dictated manuscripts by hand, but also that because we do not have the manuscripts of these dictations, such reflection remains speculative.<sup>112</sup> Therefore, rather than seeking to *make* intonation historical by incorporating such research into sound technology, this thesis contends that tone is already historical through and through, encoding as well as creating social and cultural realities within its own artifices of articulation.

---

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 6. For Thurschwell, '[i]n *In the Cage*, that overloaded Jamesian word "relation" relies on mediation through technology, or its human equivalent – the new, primarily female, human storehouse of information', *ibid.*, 10. For John Attridge, 'to grow up in Henry James is to become aware of mediation', 'The *Milieu* Is the Message: Henry James and Mediation', in *Writing Medium Machine: Modern Technographies*, ed. by Sean Pryor and David Trotter (London: Open Humanities Press, 2016), pp. 67-83 (p. 67).

<sup>110</sup> Yopie Prins, 'Voice Inverse', *Victorian Poetry*, 42.1 (2004), 43-59 (48).

<sup>111</sup> James Wood, 'Cult of the Master', *The Atlantic* (April 2003), 102-08.

<sup>112</sup> For Theodora Bosanquet, the 'different note' sounded by his later style 'was possibly due more to the substitution of dictation for pen and ink than to any profound change of heart', *Henry James at Work* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1924), p. 254. Leon Edel claims that some of James's friends were able to tell which chapter in *WMK* was the first one he dictated, but provides no further information, *Henry James: The Treacherous Years, 1895–1901* (Philadelphia and New York: J.B Lippincott Company, 1969), pp. 176-77.

Chapter 1 outlines how the very notion of the ‘auditive intelligence’ emerges from the conditions of late nineteenth-century theatre, whilst Chapter 2 demonstrates how intonation represents a consolidation of historical and personal experience, albeit one capable of corrupting as well as redeeming one’s life. Chapter 3 argues that to care for tone is to care for the past, an essential claim for James’s own conception of the survival of the self after death.

The turn to dictation in 1896 should not therefore represent the *locus classicus* it is sometimes taken to be. It is just as possible to identify this shift towards the voice in the so-called ‘dramatic years’ (1890-95), which themselves depend upon James’s theatrical criticism from the 1870’s.<sup>113</sup> Nevertheless, many of James’s most explicit formulations of tone *do* occur towards the end of the nineteenth century and continue into the twentieth: ‘Coquelin’ (1887/1915); ‘Frances Anne Kemble’ (1893); ‘The Question of Our Speech’ (1905); the ‘Preface’ to *The Golden Bowl* (1909). For this reason, with the exception of *The Tragic Muse* (Chapter 1), the majority of primary material is weighted towards the latter part of James’s career, especially *The Awkward Age*, *The Ambassadors* (Chapter 2) and *The Golden Bowl* (Chapter 3). There is always a risk of extrapolating generalisations from James’s ‘major phase’ which may or may not hold for the rest of his writing. For this reason, ‘late’ works are frequently compared with ‘early’ works, such as *The Europeans*, as well as with his non-fictional autobiographical writings (*A Small Boy and Others*, *Notes of a Son and Brother*).

The emphasis on late writings is not intended to privilege ‘lateness’ in the manner made famous by Edward Said.<sup>114</sup> When Adorno uses the concept in ‘Spätstil Beethovens’, dated 1937 and included in *Moments musicaux* (1964), lateness

---

<sup>113</sup> Fabio L. Vericat, ‘No Such Thing as Voice Pure and Simple’: Henry James’s Elocutionary Insecurities and The American’, *Novel*, 51.3 (2018), 502-24 (505).

<sup>114</sup> Other accounts of lateness include: Wendy Graham, ‘Notes on a Native Son: Henry James’s New York’, *American Literary History*, 21.2 (2009), 239–67; David McWhirter, ‘Henry James, (Post) Modernist?’, *HJR*, 25 (2004), 168–94, Philip Tsang, ‘A Transcript of Impressions: *The American Scene* and the Jamesian Aesthetics of Lateness’, *HJR*, 35.3 (2014), 295–306.

conveys ‘a moment when the artist who is fully in command of his medium abandons communication with the established social order of which he is a part and achieves a contradictory, alienated relationship with it’, as Said summarises.<sup>115</sup> It is thus that Said understands lateness as a form of ‘exile’ that ‘involves a nonharmonious, nonserene tension, and above all, a sort of deliberately unproductive productiveness going *against*....’<sup>116</sup> For Kevin Ohi, James’s late style is similarly negative, representing a withdrawal from experience of ‘derealised time’ evincing the possibility of a ‘radical antisociality’.<sup>117</sup> Following Herford, this thesis more often emphasises the opposite qualities to those stressed by queer formalism, qualities such as care, consideration, sociality, and paradoxical kinds of permanence.<sup>118</sup> Whilst this does not seek to make a theme out of style’s lateness, it should not imply that James’s style is merely coincidentally late either. Many elements of his late and later writing raise concerns peculiar to the end of James’s career, the importance of intonation for James’s thinking about the possibility of life after death being the most obvious instance of this. For this reason, the texts are, broadly speaking, arranged chronologically, starting with James’s revisions to his essay on Coquelin (1887), and *The Tragic Muse* (1890), then turning to *The Awkward Age* (1899) and *The Ambassadors* (1903), before ending with one of James’s last completed novels, *The Golden Bowl* (1904), as well as the unfinished *The Sense of the Past*.

No study of a writer who published as much as James did can ever hope to be comprehensive in its selection of materials. This thesis arranges its material according to a number of ‘test cases’ (tone being, I shall argue, itself a kind of ‘test’), to make the case for tone as clearly and convincingly as possible. Unlike multi-

---

<sup>115</sup> Edward Said, *On Late Style* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), pp. 7-8.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> Kevin Ohi, *Henry James and the Queerness of Style* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), pp. 20, 1.

<sup>118</sup> Herford advocates ‘not “disruption” but relation and reconciliation [...] not “antisociality” but the overlapping sociability of company, memory, and allusion’, *Retrospect*, p. 19.

author studies valued by many material/historical approaches, this thesis upholds the value of pursuing only one. The problems with a single-author approach are readily apparent: how can the kinds of claims made about intonation be at all comprehensive when they are only seen from one perspective? However, it is not clear either that a multi-author approach is necessarily *more* comprehensive either. Critical studies are too frequently organised according to the similitude of their subject matter rather than the necessary connectedness of their arguments, rendering the transitions between chapters arbitrary.<sup>119</sup> Whilst it is hoped that this study might productively inform studies of other writers in the future, in what follows other writers are discussed only insofar as they help elucidate what is unique about James's thinking about tone, which contributes to our understanding of James as well as the subject of intonation itself.

---

<sup>119</sup> 'Order consists in something like grouping together what is alike, in bringing the simple ahead of the composite, and in other such external considerations. But as regards any internal, necessary connectedness, the list of headings is all that there is, and a transition is made simply by saying that now we are at "Chapter Two," or that "*we now come to judgements*," and the like', Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. by George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 34.

‘The Auditive Intelligence’

### 1.0 Saying and Doing

Henry James considered his encounter with the French actor Benoît-Constant Coquelin during the 1879 tour of the Théâtre-Française to be one of the ‘landmarks’ of his life (CN: 228). However, despite this, there has been a lack of sustained critical engagement with James’s relationship with his former ‘schoolmate’.<sup>1</sup> This is all the more surprising given that James’s writings on Coquelin span a period of over forty years.<sup>2</sup> James’s own most extended treatment of the French actor occurs in his essay ‘Coquelin’, first published in the *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* on January 1887. Yet despite the fact that Coquelin is reported to have praised this as ‘the first time he has been understood’,<sup>3</sup> James felt less positively. Upon preparing it for republication in Brander Matthews’s series of *Papers on Acting*, he complained to his editor on 19 March 1915:

It has been really dreadful to me to be reminded of how filthily (yes, *je maintiens le mot*) I could at one time write, how imperfectly I could leave my

---

<sup>1</sup> For an exception, see Steven H. Jobe, ‘Henry James and the Philosophic Actor’, *American Literature*, 62 (1990), 32-43. Coquelin is alluded to by D. J. Gordon and John Stokes, in ‘The Reference of *The Tragic Muse*’, in *The Air of Reality: New Essays on Henry James*, ed. by John Goode (London: Methuen, 1972), pp. 91-167 (pp. 128, 130, 133, 138).

<sup>2</sup> Coquelin is first alluded to in the 1872 essay on ‘The Parisian Stage’, reprinted in *Transatlantic Sketches* (1873), pp. 98-109, in *CWAD2*, pp. 3-14 (pp. 4, 10), followed by ‘Parisian Affairs’ (1876), in *CWAD2*, pp. 149-54 (p. 151); more extensively in the 1877 essay on ‘The Théâtre Français’, republished in *French Poets and Novelists* (London: Macmillan, 1878), pp. 403-39, in *CWAD2*, pp. 183-207 (pp. 184, 196, 198-99, 201); then again in ‘The London Theatres’ (1879), in *CWAD2*, pp. 235-41 (p. 238); ‘The Comédie-Française in London’ (1879), in *CWAD2*, pp. 242-49 (pp. 247, 248), and ‘Edmond Rostand’ (1901), in *CWAD2*, pp. 465-90 (pp. 479, 487).

<sup>3</sup> Alice James in a letter to Alice Howe Gibbens, 20 November [1887?], in *The Death and Letters of Alice James*, ed. by Ruth Bernard Yeazell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 137. Cited in Jobe, 40.

intention expressed. This paper, as the *Century* printed it (without so much as a proof sent me in common decency) simply bristled with those intentions baffled and abandoned. (*HJL* IV: 744)

The paper's most recent editor, Peter Collister, notes that 'of all the essays [James] went on to revise for later publication, this is one of the most thoroughly rewritten' (*CWAD2*: 321). One noticeable change is the increased importance attributed to tone. In 1887, James writes:

On our own stage to *say* things is out of fashion, if for no other reason than that we must first have them to say. To *do* them, with a great reëinforcement of chairs and tables, of traps and panoramas and other devices, is the most that our Anglo-Saxon star, of either sex, aspires to. The ear of the public, that exquisite critical sense which is two-thirds of the comedian's battle-field, has simply ceased to respond from want of use. And where, indeed, is the unfortunate comedian to learn how to speak? Is it the unfortunate public that is to teach him? Gone are the days when the evolution of a story could sit on the lips of an actor. The stage-carpenter and the dress-maker have relieved him long since of that responsibility. ('Coquelin' (1887): 329)

When James came to revise this passage, '[t]he ear of the public' changes from 'that exquisite critical sense', as it was in 1887, to a fully-fledged 'field of auditive intelligence' in 1915:

"Saying" things is on our own stage quite out of fashion – if for no other reason than that we must first have them to say. To *do* them, with a great reinforcement of chairs and tables and articles of clothing, of traps and panoramas and other massive carpentry, is the most that ever occurs to our Anglo-Saxon star of either sex. The ear of the public, that field of the auditive intelligence which is two-thirds of the comedian's battlefield, has simply ceased to respond for want of use; for where in very fact is the unfortunate comedian to learn to speak? Is it the unfortunate public, sitting on all this side in deepest darkness, that is to teach him? From what sources shall the light of usage, of taste, of tact, the breath of harmony and the tone of civilization, the perception in a word of anything approaching to a standard, have descended upon the society itself out of which the actor springs? Gone at any rate are the days – if they ever really were with us – when any situation not grossly obvious, any interest *latent* in anything and thereby involving for its issue our



finer attention and nobler curiosity, could look for help from the play of tone, *the* great vehicle of communication. What this comes to is that histrionic lips have ceased – so far as they ever began! – to be able to tell a story worth telling or to gratify a taste worth gratifying. The brilliant stage-carpenter, that master of supreme illusion the scene-painter, that mistress of inordinate variety, or of the only variety we may look to, the dressmaker, have taken over the whole question. ('Coquelin' (1915): 539-40)

What does the 'auditive intelligence' mean for James, and why is it given such prominence here? It sounds like a synesthetic state, a neologism coined to describe a compound category eluding explicit formulation, especially for those unable to see beyond 'any situation not grossly obvious, any interest *latent* in anything'. Moreover, whilst the 'auditive intelligence' could initially be interpreted as simply a mode of listening, it seems to gather around it larger, weightier, implications, as though it not only included the art of tone but an entire faculty of intellection. In 'The Comédie-Française in London', James had already admired how Coquelin had 'developed an intelligence of the whole dramatic mystery which place him, to my sense, almost alone [...]. He has a deeper intelligence than is often seen upon the stage' (*CWAD2*: 248). However, the specification of an 'auditive' intelligence might seem surprising, not least in a theatrical context where many other kinds of intellect might conceivably be operable. Far from a restriction, though, this 'auditive intelligence' not only designates a quality of listening, but of intonation too. This 'field' thus represents a significant proportion ('two-thirds') of an actor's 'battle-field', essential for any 'story worth telling', 'field' suggesting a region or space between an actor and their audience, a setting for some shared or reciprocal exchange between listeners and speakers. The stakes of this 'field' are raised higher still: 'tone', in James's 1915 addition, becomes '*the* great vehicle of communication', inseparable from 'taste', 'tact' and even 'civilization' itself.

This renewed attention to tone is audible in the passage's own style as well as its explicit argumentation. In 1887, the opposition between saying and doing is conveyed by italicising both verbs, whereas in 1915 "say" is placed in inverted commas. This change is also accompanied by the avoidance of inelegant duplication

of infinitives in the previous 1887 passage: ‘*to say* things is out of fashion [...] first have them *to say*. *To do* them’ (emphasis added). The typographic distinction reinforces James’s diagnosis that “‘saying’” and ‘*doing*’ have become incommensurable activities. If the ‘religion of doing’ for James consists of the recognition that ‘to “put” things is very exactly and responsibly and interminably to do them’ (LC2: 1340), then only a properly *auditive* intelligence is capable of conceiving ‘saying’, and ‘the voice above all’, as Coquelin’s ‘most powerful means of action’, as James writes in ‘The Théâtre Français’ (CWAD2: 199).

To put “‘say’” in inverted commas rather than italics also conveys the kind of tonal shift to which the passage asks us to attend. The most straightforward explanation of this is that these inverted commas mark out the word as a translation from the French (‘*dire*’). Coquelin is himself frequently described as a ‘*diseur*’ or ‘a *diseur* so endowed’ (‘Coquelin’ (1915): 538, 537), and is recalled in *A Small Boy and Others* as ‘the most interesting and many-sided comedian, or at least most unsurpassed dramatic *diseur* of his time’ (SBOC: 319). For some, James’s tendency to use inverted commas represents an ‘ironizing gesture [which] tends to undermine or put into question the literal status of virtually any term, to turn all discourse into endless catachresis’.<sup>4</sup> Admittedly, there is a *mise-en-abîme* here once we start considering the various ways of saying a word that is itself ‘say’, and that is also a citation from the French. But rather than seeking to ‘turn all discourse into endless catachresis’, this self-witnessing authority performs the very point it describes, thereby arming James’s audience against the ‘vociferous demonstration of the plea that the way we say things – the way we “say” in general – has as little importance as possible’, as he suggests in ‘The Question of Our Speech’ (QS: 22).

Taking its lead from James’s refusal of the bad choice between saying and doing, this chapter outlines the further obstacles preventing the operation of a properly auditive intelligence. It falls into five parts. The first shows how the lack of the

---

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Litvak, *Caught in the Act: Theatricality in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 251 n.17.

proper ‘study’ of tone is one reason why the ‘unfortunate comedian’ does not know where ‘to learn to speak’. The second argues that the theatrical vogue for pictorialism (the ‘brilliant stage-carpenter, that master of supreme illusion the scene-painter’) is one reason why the ‘lesson’ of tone falls on deaf ears, a fashion in turn privileging the eye over the ear. Pictorialism is further responsible for a commitment to false totality, which intonation resists insofar as it is in itself a ‘complete drama’. The third section understands such transformational instants in terms of the ‘turning point’, the ability for tone to signify a dramatically determinate conversion where the irreversibly sudden or gradual transformation of the self transpires. The fourth section demonstrates the importance of these arguments for *The Tragic Muse*, and argues that it depicts the ways in which the auditive intelligence might not only be ‘learnt’ but maintained and preserved. The chapter concludes by briefly considering the implications of the ‘tone of civilization’ invoked in ‘Coquelin’ (‘Coquelin’ (1915): 539).

### 1.1 The Test of Tone

One reason for the decline of the auditive intelligence, to James’s mind, is the fact that English acting is ‘for the most part distinguished by a consummate want of study’, as he writes in 1882.<sup>5</sup> James was fully aware of the attempts to establish a dramatic conservatory in order to ‘make an English school of actors which shall rival the French’ (*CWAD2*: 283). The *Théâtre Français*, which James claimed to know by heart,<sup>6</sup> embodied this kind of ‘study’; it was, he writes, ‘a school of taste as was not elsewhere to be found in the world’ (‘Coquelin’ (1915): 531). This explains why the Anglo-Saxon audience find themselves sitting in ‘deepest darkness’; without the ‘light of usage’ provided by education, even a ‘star’ such as Coquelin finds themselves in the dark, an image that deftly converts the darkness of the auditorium into a cultural predicament.

---

<sup>5</sup> ‘London Pictures and London Plays’ (1882), in *CWAD2*, pp. 283-88 (p. 283).

<sup>6</sup> Letter to William James, 29 July 1876, ‘I know the Théâtre Français by heart!’ (*HJL* II: 56).

This complaint about the lack of any serious study of tone can be placed in a wider historical context. In Oscar Wilde's 'The Critic as Artist' (1891), Gilbert argues that 'there has been a tendency in literature to appeal more and more to the eye, and less and less to the ear', and proposes an alternative: '[w]e must return to the voice. That must be our test.'<sup>7</sup> For Gilbert, this 'test' is specifically motivated by a fantasised philhellenism suspicious of the arrival of the printing press and growth of reading amongst the middle and lower classes. However, Wilde was also drawing significantly on Matthew Arnold's advocacy of the essentially creative nature of criticism.<sup>8</sup> James's own 'subtle and counter-intuitive' relation to Arnold is well documented, and his appeal to French culture in opposition to the constraints of its Anglo-American counterparts possesses an Arnoldian character.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Wilde's (and James's) resistance to '*doing*' as an end in itself echoes Arnold's disavowal of the utilitarian 'rush and roar of practical life', the function of criticism always in some sense being the refusal of function, at least when pursued as an end in itself. In 'The French Play in London',<sup>10</sup> Arnold also stipulated the need for a state funded 'school of dramatic elocution and declamation' as a way of reconciling the theatre with society, and James's 'Preface' to *The Tragic Muse* alludes to Arnold's imperative for a national theatre in 1879 after the visit of the *Comédie Française* to

---

<sup>7</sup> Oscar Wilde 'The Critic as Artist', in *The Major Works*, pp. 241-88 (pp. 249, 250).

<sup>8</sup> Matthew Arnold, 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time', in *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings*, ed. by Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 26-52 (p. 29).

<sup>9</sup> For James's relation to Arnold, see T.J. Lustig, 'James, Arnold, "Culture", and "Modernity"; or, A Tale of Two Dachshunds', *Cambridge Quarterly*, 37 (2008), 164-93.

<sup>10</sup> "Let a school of dramatic elocution and declamation be instituted in connection with your company. It may surprise you to hear that elocution and declamation are things to be taught and learnt, and do not come by nature, but it is so. Your best and most serious actors" (this is added with a smile) "would have been better, if in their youth they had learnt elocution", Matthew Arnold, 'The French Play in London', in *English Literature and Irish Politics*, ed. by R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973), pp. 64-85 (pp. 84-5). 'Philistinism' is a term used to describe the British public in 'London Pictures and London Plays', and which James glosses in his review of Arnold's *Essays in Criticism* (1865), in *LCL*, pp. 711-19 (pp. 715-16).

London: ‘the theatre, the organized theatre, will be, as Matthew Arnold was in those very days pronouncing it, irresistible’ (*LC2*: 1116).<sup>11</sup>

However, James also knew it would take more than even ‘the hottest histrionic forcing-house’ to fully restore the auditive intelligence and initiate a ‘transformation of English life, of the English temperament, of the English tongue’, as he writes in ‘London Pictures and London Plays’ (*CWAD2*: 283-84). One way of advancing this ‘serious study’ of tone is to conceive of it as one place where examination occurs, a test of tone both in the sense that tone is tested and is itself the means of testing the rights and wrongs of expression. Rights and wrongs because intonation functions as ‘that test of further development which so exposes the wrong and so consecrates the right’, to adapt James’s ‘Preface’ to *The Aspern Papers* (*LC2*: 1181). The test of tone, in both senses of the phrase, is equally alive to the potential discriminations of phrasing that remain unvoiced as well as those that are, and is constantly vigilant to the implications of hearing a statement in one way as opposed to another.

As a compositional method, such tests are always worth making. When sketching out a story in a *Notebook* entry for 21 August 1911, the solution to the problem of ascertaining the ‘motives’ of James’s protagonists resides in expository declaration:

Attempt to *state* them – and then one sees. This *test* of the statement is moreover in any case such an exquisite thing that it’s always worth making, if only for the way it brings back the spell of the old sacred days. (*CN*: 207)

The test of tone is richly rewarding, if only for its enchanting nostalgia. ‘Statement’, as Philip Horne notes, suggests at once a ‘preliminary scenario for a work of fiction’ and ‘the act of stating; the latter being the scrupulously detailed thinking-through in language which goes to make up the former’.<sup>12</sup> In his *Notebooks* (December 17 1909), James describes how ‘one doesn’t know – ideally – till one has got into real

---

<sup>11</sup> “‘The theatre is irresistible; *organise the theatre!*’”, in ‘The French Play in London’, p. 82.

<sup>12</sup> Horne, *Revision*, p. 74.

close quarters with one's proposition by absolutely ciphering it out, by absolutely putting to the proof and to the test what it will give' (CN: 259).<sup>13</sup> 'Close quarters' suggests that 'putting [...] to the test' resembles a kind of hand-to-hand combat, the immediacy of which derives from the confined space on the ship where a last stand might be made (OED n.1.). But the closeness of this test conveys the closeness of intimacy as well as a fight to the death, a relation of trust or sociable companionship. This is sometimes found in marriage: James admired William Wetmore Story's matrimony for its 'unsurpassable closeness' which 'was one of those things, in its kind, that still suffice to confer success in life, as Pater has it, even if everything else has failed' (WWS I: 39).<sup>14</sup> The 'Preface' (1909) to *The Golden Bowl* explicitly figures such closeness in relation to tone when it describes the secrets writing gives up under 'closest pressure – which is of course the pressure of the attention articulately *sounded*', thereby renouncing the 'withheld tests' of the 'soundless, the "quiet" reading' (LC2: 1339), as outlined in the 'Introduction' to this thesis. This 'vivâ-voce treatment' captures a sense of examination as well as enlivenment (LC2: 1339), but the difference between it and the 'serious study' demanded by the auditive intelligence, as advocated in 1882, is that in 1909 the voice is figured as the examiner rather than the pupil in need of edification.

In 'Coquelin', tone is not only a compositional resource, but is also capable of providing its own 'lesson':

To enjoy the refinement of [Coquelin's] acting, however, the ear must be as open as the eye, must even be beforehand with it; and if that of the American spectator in general learns, or even shows an aptitude for learning, the lessons conveyed in his finest creations, the lesson that acting is an art, and that the

---

<sup>13</sup> James is referring to the 'K.B. Case', namely the Katharine De Kay Bronson figure who functions as a "'sympathetic American'" in the 'cosmopolite milieu' that would become *The Ivory Tower* (unfinished) (CN: 256).

<sup>14</sup> Closeness is also described as part of the 'harmonies of tone' in Balzac's 'myriad ordered stitches' (LC2: 138). 'Balzac stands almost alone as an extemporizer achieving closeness and weight, and whom closeness and weight have preserved' (LC2: 121). For James's revision of Pater's phrase 'success in life' to convey 'continuity and cohabitation', see Herford, *Retrospect*, p. 246.

application of an art is style, and that style is expression and that expression is the salt of life, the gain will have something more than the sensation of the moment – it will be a new wisdom. ('Coquelin' (1915): 533)

Outlining the 'lesson' of Coquelin, James's revision emphasises the epistemic rather than just perceptively determinate quality of style (revising 'perception' to 'new wisdom').<sup>15</sup> In a comparable amplification of the 1887 text, the claim that the 'impression of the ear can always charm away anything that needs to be got rid of in the eye' ('Coquelin' (1887): 332), is revised to:

The impression of the ear, it can scarce be too often repeated, may always at the worst charm away the objections raised by the eye; tho [sic] I have never known the impression of the eye to charm away a protest strongly made by the ear. ('Coquelin' (1915): 543)

The added chiasmus articulates an imbalance of power between competing faculties; the ear performs more than a purgative function and outdoes the eye on all counts. Rhythm also performs its own 'gain' of expression when James outlines the 'new wisdom' to be gleaned from keeping our ears as open as our eyes; the last word of one clause is repeated at the start of the next, concluding with the added suggestion 'that style is expression and that expression is the salt of life'.<sup>16</sup> The auditive intelligence thus exceeds the 'sensation of the moment' (a phrase recalling Walter Pater's high estimation of the passing of the moment 'simply for those moments' sake'),<sup>17</sup> and avoids a fleeting evanescence in favour of a more renewable, generative

---

<sup>15</sup> '[T]he lesson conveyed in his finest creations, the lesson that acting is an art and that art is style, the gain will have been something more than the sensation of the moment – it will have been an added perception' ('Coquelin' (1887): 322).

<sup>16</sup> We might compare this 'gain' with James's revised 'Introduction' (1914) to *Madame Bovary*, where the French novelist is said to have believed 'that beauty comes with expression, that expression is creation, that it *makes* the reality, and only in the degree in which it *is*, exquisitely, expression', in *LC2*, pp. 314-46 (p. 340). This also echoes James's famous letter to H.G. Wells on the 10 July 1914: '[i]t is art that *makes* life, makes interest, makes importance' (*HJLL*: 555). See Herford, *Retrospect*, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Walter Pater, 'Conclusion' to *The Renaissance*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 118-21 (p. 121).

and sustaining conception of style, one where tone at once teaches and tests according to its own auditive curriculum.

## 1.2 'A Complete Drama'

One reason why Anglo-American culture lacks the test of tone so powerfully exemplified on the French stage was the vogue for pictorialism. Under Henry Irving's management, '[s]cenery and decorations', James argues in 'London Pictures and London Plays', 'have been brought to their highest perfection, while elocution and action, the interpretation of meaning, have not been made the objects of serious study' (*CWAD2*: 285). *Romeo and Juliet* is thus transformed 'from a splendid and delicate poem into a gorgeous and over-weighted spectacle' (*CWAD2*: 284). This merely puts 'the cart before the horse' in the sense that the 'play is not acted, it is costumed' (*CWAD2*: 285). Coquelin's auditive intelligence, by contrast, 'is not pictorial, and his clothes scarcely matter' ('Coquelin' (1915): 532). This resists 'that mistress of inordinate variety, or of the only variety we may look to, the dressmaker' ('Coquelin' (1915): 540).<sup>18</sup> Pictorialism thus not only prevents the 'serious study' of tone, but also embodies the kind of false praxis responsible for this separation between saying and doing, a neglect of 'elocution and action', and, we might add, of elocution *as* action.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> This echoes one of James's favourite Shakespearian allusions to Cleopatra, the 'mistress of infinite variety' (II. 2. 238-39). Madame de Vionnet is described as 'like Cleopatra in the play, indeed various and multifold' (*CFHJ XVIII*: 170). Miriam Rooth similarly possesses an 'infinite variety' (*TM II*: 632). James might also have been hearing 'Variétés' here, the vaudevilles, operettas and farces that were performed at 7, Boulevard Montmartre, and which James described in 'The Parisian Stage' (1876) as 'that dreary, flimsy burlesque of the events of the year, which is the pretext for so many bad jokes and undressed *figurantes*' (*CWAD2*: 134). James's ear was sensitive to the possibility for hearing 'variety' in different ways, as when he describes how Jim Pocock, when attending such a show, 'pronounced [the word] in the American manner' (*CFHJ XVIII*: 238).

<sup>19</sup> Pictorialism as opposed to the 'picturesque', the latter being a term to which James paid close attention. See Tamara Follini, 'Introduction' to *Italian Hours* (London: Century Press, 1986), pp. vi-ix (p. xvi). For James's complicated and continual revision of this term, see Oliver Herford, 'Revisions of the Picturesque', in *Retrospect*, pp. 149-74.



Irving, James writes in ‘The London Theatres’ (1881), is ‘what is called a picturesque actor; that is, he depends for his effects upon the art with which he presents a certain figure to the eye, rather than upon the manner in which he speaks his part’, and thus he has ‘almost nothing to do’ with ‘the art of utterance, of saying the thing’.<sup>20</sup> The art of tone is explicitly opposed to the picturesque when Irving’s ‘prospects as a Shakespearian actor’ are described in James’s early essay, also titled ‘The London Theatres’ (1877):

You can play hop-scotch on one foot, but you cannot cut with one blade of a pair of scissors, and you cannot play Shakespeare by being simply picturesque. Above all, before all, for this purpose you must have the art of utterance; you must be able to give value to the divine Shakespearian line – to make it charm our ears as it charms our mind.<sup>21</sup>

The claim you cannot ‘play Shakespeare by being simply picturesque’ any more than you can ‘cut with one blade of a pair of scissors’ is recalled in the 1889 dialogue, ‘After the Play’, where pictorialism’s false priority of the ‘theatre’ over ‘drama’ is rejected: each are as inseparable from each other as ‘the two blades of a pair of scissors’.<sup>22</sup> In this work, written in the Wildean form of the essay-as-play-text,<sup>23</sup> the figure of Dorriforth (whose position is closest to James’s own) expounds an alternative conception of aesthetic totality to that represented by the pictorial trend:

DORRIFORTH. The face and the voice are more to the purpose than acres of painted canvas, and a touching intonation, a vivid gesture or two, than an army of supernumeraries.

AUBERON. Why not have everything – the face, the voice, the touching intonations, the vivid gestures, the acres of painted canvas, *and* the army of supernumeraries? Why not use bravely and intelligently every resource of which the stage disposes? What else was Richard Wagner’s great theory, in producing his operas at Bayreuth? (*CWAD2*: 350)

---

<sup>20</sup> *CWAD2*, pp. 250-22 (p. 255).

<sup>21</sup> *CWAD2*, pp. 208-28 (218).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 345-65 (p. 537).

<sup>23</sup> As used in ‘*Daniel Deronda: A Conversation*’ (1876), in *LCI*, pp. 974-92, and ‘*An Animated Conversation*’ (1889), in *LCI*, pp. 66-72.

It would indeed be ‘the ideal’, Dorriforth replies, ‘[t]o have the picture complete at the same time the figures do their part in producing the particular illusion required’, but it is much more important, although more difficult, to ‘represent a situation by the delicacy of personal art than by “building it in”’ (*CWAD2*: 350).<sup>24</sup> For Dorriforth, false edification reveals the limits of monumental cohesion, leaving us a ‘pictorial whole, not a dramatic one’ (*CWAD2*: 351). Wagner’s ‘great theory’ exemplifies this pre-fabricated aesthetic totality, where each artistic genre must sacrifice its own identity for the greater whole, an objection echoed by later critics for whom Wagner embodied a kind of monumentalised dilettantism, seeking unity between all the arts without possessing expertise in any.<sup>25</sup> Dorriforth suggests that a single tone might in fact be more ‘complete’ or ‘total’ than a merely pictorial alternative, than even the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, because the ‘imagination, in certain cases, is more finely persuaded by the little than by the much’ (*CWAD2*: 349).

James’s allusion to Coquelin’s ‘play of tone, *the* great vehicle of communication’ (‘Coquelin’ (1915): 540), thus contains the sense of tone as itself a ‘play’, a dramatic ‘act’ in and of itself, which further refuses the separation between saying and doing. In ‘A Study of Salvini’ (1884), James describes how no other word than ‘luxury’ will express ‘such qualities of voice and glance, such a magnificent apparatus of expression’.<sup>26</sup> In Salvini’s 1884 performance of *La Morte Civile*, such qualities are

in themselves a high entertainment [...] his splendid voice carries, as it were, the whole drama; without a note of violence, of effort, deep and intensely quiet

---

<sup>24</sup> Dorriforth continues to describe how everything points towards this tendency for building in (*CWAD2*: 352). In ‘London’ (January 1897), James similarly had a ‘sore sense’ ‘that the more Shakespeare was “built in” the more we are built out’ upon watching Henry Irving’s 1897 production of *Richard III*, in *CWAD2*, pp. 448-56 (p. 450).

<sup>25</sup> Theodor Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso, 2005), pp. 18-19.

<sup>26</sup> *CWAD2*, pp. 313-19 (p. 316).

from beginning to end, it reflects the finest shades of concentrated emotion, and goes to the depths of the listener's mind. (*CWAD2*: 316)

'As it were' intimates that 'carry' suggests both load-bearing activity and an auditory reverberation; not only does Salvini's tone play a supporting role for the drama, so to speak, but his tone is how such drama is itself conveyed.<sup>27</sup>

The ability of Salvini's voice to carry the whole drama is one example of the way that, on the French stage, every aspect of expression was so carefully worked over as to become powerfully eloquent. This is again suggested in 'The Théâtre Français':

Never has he [the audience member] seen anything so smooth and harmonious, so artistic and complete. He heard all his life of attention to detail, and now, for the first time, he sees something that deserves the name. He sees dramatic effort refined to a point with which the English stage is unacquainted. He sees that there are no limits to possible 'finish', and that so trivial an act as taking a letter from a servant or placing one's hat on a chair may be made a suggestive and interesting incident. (*CWAD2*: 188)

The recognition that 'incident' may reside in 'so trivial an act as taking a letter from a servant or placing one's hat on a chair' recalls 'The Art of Fiction' (1884), where James observes how '[i]t is an incident for a woman to stand up with her hand resting on a table and look out at you in a certain way' (*LCI*: 55). The image also occurs in 'Coquelin': recalling his first evenings in the 'Rue de Richelieu', James was 'dazzled by the universal finish, by an element of control which at that time seemed to me supreme', by the way that 'gentlemen put down their hats with great accuracy on the first chair on the right of the door as they come in, but do very little more than that' ('Coquelin' (1887): 324). The understanding of tone as itself a complete drama thus

---

<sup>27</sup> James similarly admired 'M. Coquelin's art of tone' for its 'power to "carry" sound and sense': 'I hear it as I write ascend again like a rocket to the great hushed dome of the old theatre [Rue de Richelieu], under which, vibrating and lashing the air, it seems to have sprung from some mechanism of still greater science even than the human throat' ('Coquelin' (1915): 538).

draws on James's previous refusal of the 'old-fashioned distinction between the novel of character and the novel of incident' (*LCI*: 54). This makes it possible for Chad Newsome's tone to convey to Strether a 'whole story' (*CFHJ* XVIII: 157).<sup>28</sup> Just as it might be an 'incident' to place one's hat on a chair, so can Vanderbank's 'posture in the large chair he had pushed towards the open window' be 'of itself almost an opinion' in *The Awkward Age* (*AA*: 306). These examples offer analogies for the operation of tone as paralinguistic modes of expression eluding direct paraphrase. 'Finish' combines this sense of refinement with completeness, indicating how every aspect of expression should be capable of bearing a dramatic totality.<sup>29</sup> In 'The London Theatres' (1879), James locates such 'finish' within the voice itself, arguing that in 'the opinion of many people the basis, the prime condition, of acting is the art of finished beautiful utterance – the art of speaking, of saying, of diction, as the French call it' (*CWAD2*: 237).

The eloquence of such gestures not only illuminates the operation of tone. Such gestures are themselves figured as like tone, as James writes of Coquelin:

[W]hat are his motions, what is his play of face, but so many tones and syllables, so many signified mute words, all making sentences and with the sole difference of their being address [sic] to the mental instead of the physical ear. Language is not the less in question for its but *appearing* to be uttered; when the art is consummate we fail to distinguish between appearance and sound. ('Coquelin' (1915): 543)

These gestures possess such 'finish' that they are audible as tones addressed to our 'mental ears'. This sense of expression pervading every part of Coquelin's person only occurs when 'the art is consummate', positioning 'tones' as well as 'language' at the apex of dramatic expression. The intonationally expressive resources of one's

---

<sup>28</sup> In 'The Parisian Stage', the 'concentrated timorous prudence of the abbé's "*Oh! non!*"' in Edmond Got's 1872 performance of Alfred de Musset's *Il ne Faut Jurer de Rien* constitutes 'a master-stroke; it depicts a lifetime' (*CWAD2*: 6).

<sup>29</sup> For John Ruskin's account of 'true' and 'vain' 'finish', see *Modern Painters*, 5 vols (London: Smith Elder and Co., 1843-1860), I (1843), pp. 81-83.

whole person are similarly described in James's earlier essay on 'The Parisian Stage', where Suzanne Reichemberg's 'movement' is described as 'an intonation in gesture as eloquent as if she had spoken it', an attention to 'detail – detail of a kind we not only do not find but do not even look for on the English stage' (*CWAD2*: 5-6).

James's fiction is remarkably alert to the ways in which tone might be in itself a complete story or drama. One such moment occurs in *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881) during the exchange between Isabel and Madame Merle at Pansy's convent:

So Madame Merle went on, with much of the brilliancy of a woman who had long been a mistress of the art of conversation. But there were phases and gradations in her speech, not one of which was lost upon Isabel's ear, though her eyes were absent from her companion's face. She had not proceeded far before Isabel noted a sudden rupture in her voice, which was in itself a complete drama. This subtle modulation marked a momentous discovery – the perception of an entirely new attitude on the part of her listener. Madame Merle had guessed in the space of an instant that everything was at an end between them, and in the space of another instant she had guessed the reason why. The person who stood there was not the same one she had seen hitherto; it was a very different person – a person who knew her secret. This discovery was tremendous, and for the moment she made it the most accomplished of women faltered and lost her courage. But only for that moment. Then the conscious stream of her perfect manner gathered itself again and flowed on as smoothly as might be to the end.<sup>30</sup>

The recognition of tone's 'complete drama' here testifies to Isabel's auditive intelligence; 'not one of' the 'phases and gradations' in Madame Merle's speech are 'lost upon Isabel's ear'. Madame Merle's tone reveals that she knows that *Isabel* knows that she is Pansy's mother, and the 'completeness' of this drama derives from the way tone effects a transformational instant where the possibility of an entire and

---

<sup>30</sup> Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, ed. by Michael Anesko, in *CFHJ*, VII (2016), p. 530.

irreversible conversion of the self suddenly transpires, a revelatory moment where previously concealed relations suddenly adopt an emphatic salience.<sup>31</sup>

The formulation of Madame Merle's tone as a 'complete drama' was the outcome of considerable deliberation on James's part.<sup>32</sup> This 'whole matter of Mme Merle', he writes in his *Notebooks*, 'is a very ticklish one – very delicate and difficult to handle. To make it natural that she should have brought about Isabel's marriage to her old lover – this is in itself a supreme difficulty' (CN: 14).

I am not sure that it would not be best that the exposure of Mme Merle should never be complete, and above all that she should not denounce herself. This would injure very much the impression I have wished to give of her profundity, her self-control, her regard for appearances. (CN: 15)<sup>33</sup>

As often, tone was the solution to James's problem, since by deriving Madame Merle's revelation from no more than a modulation amongst her otherwise 'perfect manner', the 'complete drama' of her exposure can be maintained without compromising her self-control. The complete drama of Madame Merle's tone thus depends upon the enigmatic incompleteness of her exposure (James describes it as the 'phantom of exposure' (PL: 531)). James often demonstrates how intonation

---

<sup>31</sup> The ability for the voice to negotiate the tension between the rupture of release and the preservation of decorous poise is a peculiarly Tennysonian skill; Madame Merle's faltering and subsequent 'gather[ing]' of the 'conscious stream of her perfect manner' recalls the moment from 'Guinevere' (1859), in *Idylls of the King*, when Guinevere discovers Arthur lying slain:

Then she stretched out her arms and cried aloud  
"Oh Arthur!" there her voice brake suddenly,  
Then – as a stream that spouting from a cliff  
Fails in mid air, but gathering at the base  
Re-makes itself, and flashes down the vale –  
Went on in passionate utterance:

"Gone – my lord!  
Gone through my sin to slay and to be slain!"

(ll. 602-08), in *Selected Poems*, p. 957. See also Griffiths, *Printed*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>32</sup> See Horne, *Revision*, p. 210.

<sup>33</sup> Also cited in *ibid*.

reveals involuntary truths that nevertheless become dramatically determinate in this way without ever being made wholly explicit. It is in this that the novelist's own auditive intelligence consists.

The complete drama of Madame Merle's tone is echoed in the scene from *The Golden Bowl* where Charlotte Stant shows visitors Adam Verver's various *objets d'art*.<sup>34</sup> Here mental recognition takes an ambiguously vocal form:

So the high voice quavered, aiming truly at effects far over the heads of gaping neighbours; so the speaker, piling it up, sticking at nothing, as less interested judges might have said, seemed to justify the faith with which she was honoured. Maggie meanwhile, at the window, knew the strangest thing to be happening: she had turned suddenly to crying, or was at least on the point of it – the lighted square before her all blurred and dim. The high voice went on; its quaver was doubtless for conscious ears only, but there were verily thirty seconds during which it sounded, for our young woman, like the shriek of a soul in pain. Kept up a minute longer it would break and collapse – so that Maggie felt herself the next thing turn with a start to her father. "Can't she be stopped? Hasn't she done it *enough*?" – some such question as that she let herself ask him to suppose in her. (*GB*: 495)

As in *The Portrait of a Lady*, James describes a 'young heroine listening to a monologue by her treacherous friend and picking out the troubled consciousness denoted by the quality of her voice'.<sup>35</sup> The deep anguish of Charlotte's marriage is expressed by little more than a tremulous tone audible only to the most alert and sensitive of listeners. This distinction between Charlotte's actual verbal emphasis ('quaver'), and the way in which it gains dramatic force ('shriek') for the listeners based on their interpretative contexts, reveals the ways in which Maggie, Charlotte, Amerigo, and Adam all perceive each other's relations. When Maggie hears Charlotte's intonation, it accompanies her desire that Adam hear her own voice without Maggie needing to speak. Adam, moreover, also hears Charlotte's suffering, and Maggie sees him 'confessing, with strange tears in his own eyes, to a sharp

---

<sup>34</sup> The comparison is made by Horne, *Revision*, p. 211-12.

<sup>35</sup> Horne, *Revision*, p. 212.

identity of emotion. ““Poor thing, poor thing” – it reached straight – “*isn’t* she, for one’s credit, on the swagger?”” (GB: 495) Amerigo, on the other hand, ‘got off to escape from a sound. The sound was in her own ears still – that of Charlotte’s high coerced quaver before the cabinets in the hushed gallery; the voice by which she herself had been pierced the day before’, and ‘the wonder for her became really his not feeling the need of wider intervals and thicker walls’ (GB: 497). As a result, Maggie and Amerigo’s shared experience of Charlotte’s unsounded shriek brings them together:

It was to her buried face that she thus, for a long time, felt him draw nearest; though after a while, when the strange wail of the gallery began to repeat its inevitable echo, she was conscious of how that brought out his pale, hard grimace. (GB: 497)

Charlotte’s intonation is not quite hers, but it is not entirely separate from her either. Her tone, like her suffering, becomes curiously detached, depending upon its relation to others, ‘as if her unhappiness had been necessary to us – as if we needed her, at her own cost, to build us up and start us’ (GB: 532).<sup>36</sup> Here the complete drama derives *from* Maggie’s consciousness rather than being enacted upon it, as was the case in *The Portrait of a Lady*.<sup>37</sup> Unlike the earlier work, the complete drama of Charlotte’s tone depends on the ability for competing consciousnesses to hear a quaver as a cry and to commune silently with each other on that basis. As such, it invites a distinction between James’s middle and later style, whereby the auditive intelligence becomes an essential part of consciousness itself. This point is reinforced by the way that Charlotte’s imaginary ‘quaver’, which itself recalls Madame Merle’s ‘quiver’ (PL: 530), echoes an earlier scene in the novel when Maggie greets Amerigo after he returns from the country with Charlotte. She makes what appears to be a long speech after which we are told that ‘[s]ome such words as those were what

---

<sup>36</sup> See Sharon Cameron, *Thinking in Henry James* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989), p. 100.

<sup>37</sup> Horne, *Revision*, p. 212.



*didn't* ring out, yet it was as if even the unuttered sound had been quenched here in its own quaver' (*GB*: 300). Here it is not only that the unvoiced words are heard, but, paradoxically, as though their very audibility were self-consuming (the effect is exacerbated by the intercalated echo of 'quenched' and 'quaver'). It is not until later in the novel, when Maggie speaks to Charlotte, that this tone will be physically voiced in 'as quenched a quaver as possible' (*GB*: 508). Similarly, in relation to Charlotte's shriek, Maggie's words '*didn't* ring out', but Amerigo nevertheless 'had taken in what he needed to take – that his wife was *testifying*, that she adored and missed and desired him' (*GB*: 300). Thinking becomes analogous to 'ventriloquism', where one might think for another as one might speak for another.<sup>38</sup> However, this relationship between thought and voice could also be reversed. James, that is to say, is making us hear something like the very intonation of thinking itself, a way of thinking in tones.

These examples demonstrate various ways in which a single tone might, to use one of James's favourite phrases, 'make a scene'. The key passage here occurs in *A Small Boy and Others* when James remembers visiting his uncle Augustus's house in Rhinebeck, on the Hudson River, with his father during the summer of 1854 (*SBOC*: 152). Another relative, Catherine Temple, was also there, and she had been ordered away from Albany where her husband was dying (Henry Sr was her brother, and he was also there to look after her). James recalls his cousin Marie's reluctance to go to bed when asked to do so by her father Augustus. After running 'as for refuge in the maternal arms', Marie draws from her mother 'the simple phrase that was from that moment so preposterously to "count" for me':

"Come now, my dear; don't make a scene – I *insist* on your not making a scene!" That was all the witchcraft the occasion used, but the note was none the less epoch-making. The expression, so vivid, so portentous, was one I had

---

<sup>38</sup> Sharon Cameron has related this strangely interpersonal quality of Charlotte's intonation to the ekstasis of the Jamesian mind: '[t]he cry is what allows them to think to each other' and 'demonstrates the particular power which consciousness has to observe distinctions among points of view, to hold them in mind, while simultaneously differentiating them from that of the perceiving consciousness', pp. 100, 98.

never heard – it had never been addressed to us at home; and who should say now what a world one mightn't at once read into it? It seemed freighted to sail so far; it told me so much about life. Life at these intensities clearly became "scenes"; but the great thing, the immense illumination, was that we could make them or not as we chose. (*SBOC*: 152)

'The mark had been made for me and the door flung upon' (*SBOC*: 152), and the 'mark', Tony Tanner writes, 'for the future novelist, has been made'.<sup>39</sup> The scene is 'justly famous', Peter Collister notes, for its 'humorously light suggestion of performance in social intercourse', as well as for illuminating James's own 'creative practice, his adherence to what he called the dramatic *scène à faire*, and his vision of the novel as a succession of such fully worked imagined interchanges' (*SBOC*: 153 n.330). Significantly too, the 'note' of James's cousin is just as 'vivid' as the novelty of the expression itself; the stress ('*insist*'), as much as the phrase, is 'epoch-making'. So powerful is this 'note' that it supplants the actual historical occasion; it is irrelevant whether or not James's cousin did actually 'make a scene' because this note itself comprises a complete scene: it 'didn't in the least matter accordingly whether or no a scene *was* then proceeded to', because 'the passage, gathering up *all* the elements of the troubled time, had been itself a scene, quite enough of one, and I had become aware with it of a rich accession of possibilities' (*SBOC*: 152-53). The 'passage' not only evokes a scene or exchange, but also a journey, and indeed the expression itself both 'carried' the scene and 'seemed freighted to sail far'. The drama of Madame Merle's slip of tone, in contrast, resides in the way it nearly scuppers her passage: 'she was able only just to glide into port, faintly grazing the bottom' (*PL*: 531). The 'scene' is thus more complex than simply the depiction of a young person's bad behaviour. It also enacts the shift, from revelation to highly nuanced psychological drama, at the heart of James's later fiction.

Even though Madame Merle's tone reminds us of the necessarily partial nature of dramatic totality, the claim that a single tone might 'in itself' constitute a complete

---

<sup>39</sup> Tony Tanner, *Henry James and the Art of Nonfiction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), p. 64.

scene or drama, capable of competing against pictorialism's pursuit of spectacle for its own sake, or even the Wagnerian 'total' work of art, is of course granting tone a great deal of power. A sceptic might doubt tone's ability to bear this kind of weight, or as "“apparently drawing immense conclusions from very small matters”" (GB: 426), to adapt the Prince's response to Maggie's interpretation of the golden bowl. When the Prince asks Fanny Assingham, after she smashes the bowl before Maggie, "“what in the world, my dear, *did* you mean by it?”", this is said in a tone that rivals arguably the most dramatically charged action in the whole novel: this 'sound, as at the touch of a spring, rang out' and 'broke upon the two women's absorption with a sharpness almost equal to the smash of the crystal' (GB: 416). To some extent, James anticipates the sceptical responses to the weight a single tone is made to bear in such moments by suggesting that his aunt's intonation was the 'only witchcraft the occasion used', alluding to the moment when Othello insists that his seduction of Desdemona was accomplished by nothing more than recounting the story of his life (I. 3. 168). It is not just that such tones cannot be interpreted without restoring their contexts to them, but their expressive force depends upon that local web of patternings and relations in which they are caught and which they in turn illuminate. To adapt James's justification of the famous ending of *The Portrait*, leaving Isabel 'en l'air':

The *whole* of anything is never told; you can only take what groups together. What I have done has that unity – it groups together. It is complete in itself – and the rest may be taken up or not, later. (CN: 15)<sup>40</sup>

Often it is in the very insubstantiality of such moments that their dramatic force resides. Maggie's revelation to her husband of 'the abrupt bend in her life' (GB: 297) is conveyed by no more than the fact that 'she had merely driven, on a certain Wednesday, to Portland Place, instead of remaining in Eaton Square' (GB: 294). There is 'no reason why she should have seen the mantle of history flung, by a single

---

<sup>40</sup> Cited in Horne, *Revision*, p. 218.

sharp sweep, over so commonplace a deed. That, all the same, was what had happened' (*GB*: 294). The 'minute departure from custom' represented by meeting Amerigo at home instead of with the others is impossible to make explicit, since nothing more has 'happened' than the fact 'that he saw his wife in her own drawing-room at the hour when she would most properly be there' (*GB*: 298). This is all the witchcraft Maggie needs, and she 'couldn't have narrated afterwards' how this turning point was provoked, just as James depicts tone as a paralinguistic mode of expression which eludes direct or paraphrasable formulation.

James's interest in archetypal moments of conversion, as suggested by either Isabel's turning point, the 'abrupt bend' in Maggie's life, or the epoch-making note of James's cousin, may well derive from a tradition of spiritual autobiography learnt from his father, as Andrew Taylor has suggested: '[t]he conversion of history into parable, life into paradigm, the finite into the infinite, is the rhetorical strategy that enables him to achieve this.'<sup>41</sup> The question of whether a single tone is 'really' capable of performing such a function thus need not even arise if reality is always already subordinated to theological truth. The risk here, however, is that tone is asked to perform merely an allegorical or symbolic function, where each detail is subordinated to an overarching interpretative meaning. The effect of such tones can be contrasted with the impression made upon James by Tintoretto's 'The Last Supper':

It was the whole scene that Tintoret seemed to have beheld, in a flash of inspiration intense enough to stamp it ineffaceably on his perception; and it was the whole scene, complete, peculiar, individual, unprecedented, which he committed to canvas with all the vehemence of his talent. (*TS*: 92-93)

James's admiration of this painting, as Tom Nichols and Tessa Hadley write, does not depend upon his 'allegorical transfiguration of natural details, but rather in his

---

<sup>41</sup> Andrew Taylor, *Henry James and the Father Question* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 59.

ability to conceive of “the whole scene” in all its dimensions’.<sup>42</sup> ‘Allegorical’ was the manner in which Ruskin understood Tintoretto, even at his most naturalistic,<sup>43</sup> whilst for James, ‘[b]efore his greatest works you are conscious of a sudden evaporation of old doubts and dilemmas, and the eternal problem of the conflict between idealism and realism dies the most natural of deaths’ (*TS*: 91). For Nichols and Hadley, what is ‘Tintoretto-like’ in James’s later writing is the synthesis of realism and symbolism whereby ‘the very accidents of the particularized historical scene enact its deep content; they *are* the revelation’, no longer requiring the ‘accompanying illuminating narrative explanation’.<sup>44</sup> Madame Merle’s ‘subtle modulation’ or the ‘epoch-making’ note of James’s aunt ‘carry’ their whole or complete drama without being pre-empted by allegorical identifications, where each individual aspect of expression is made to fulfil its predetermined function. Like the refined finish of the dropping of a hat or the eloquence with which one might open a window, the auditive intelligence often operates at the limit or threshold of allegorisation, exhausting the possibilities of symbolic signification, as though each tone could be understood as merely a sign for something else. Tone may carry no more than an implication, but through this implicitness it evokes a dramatic depth or ‘totality’ too rich to be discursively assimilable.

### 1.3 Turning Points

The ability for tone to produce moments of conversation such as Madame Merle’s ‘modulation’ or the note of James’s Aunt is intimated by a passage in James’s 1897 commemorative essay on George du Maurier, where he describes ‘the part that music had played in [du Maurier’s] life and that it was always liable to play in his talk’.<sup>45</sup> He proceeds to praise du Maurier’s attention to the voice:

---

<sup>42</sup> Tom Nichols and Tessa Hadley, ‘James, Ruskin, and Tintoretto’, *HJR*, 23.3 (2002), 294-303 (301).

<sup>43</sup> Consider for instance his famous description of the *Annunciation*, in *Modern Painters*, II (1846), p. 170. Nichols and Hadley, ‘James, Ruskin, and Tintoretto’, 297.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>45</sup> ‘George du Maurier’, in *LC2*, pp. 876-906 (p. 891).

It seemed to me that he almost *saw* the voice, as he saw the features and limbs, and quite as if this had been but one of the subtler secrets of his impaired vision. He talked of it ever as if he could draw it and would particularly like to; as if, certainly, he would gladly have drawn the wonderful passage – when the passage was, like some object of Ruskinian preference, “wholly right” – through which proper ‘production’ came forth. Did he not, in fact, practically delineate these irresistible adjuncts to the universal ravage of Trilby? It was at any rate not for want of intention that he didn’t endow her with an organ that he could have stroked with his pencil as tenderly as you might have felt it with your hand. (*LCI*: 891-92)

The ability to ‘see’ the voice not only applies to du Maurier’s *Punch* illustrations,<sup>46</sup> but the way that he talked of the voice as if he could draw it, as though it were a physiognomic property to observe (like ‘features and limbs’). The ‘object of Ruskinian preference’ explains the tenderness of such attention, alluding as it does to the following passage in *Praeterita* (1885) when Ruskin recalls the first occasion when ‘I made a sketch on Sunday’:<sup>47</sup>

Very happy in my Sunday walk, I gathered what wild flowers were in their first springing, and came home with a many-coloured cluster, in which the dark-purple orchis was chief. I had never examined its structure before, and by this afternoon sunlight did so with care; also it seemed to me wholly right to describe it as I examined; and to draw the outlines as I described, though with a dimly alarmed consciousness of its being a new fact in existence for me, that I should draw on a Sunday.<sup>48</sup>

Just as du Maurier’s care for the vocal organ is ‘stroked with his pencil as tenderly as you might have felt it with your hand’, Ruskin’s examination of floral structures by afternoon sunlight is performed ‘with care’. In his diary, Ruskin sketches flower

---

<sup>46</sup> ‘[T]hose illustrations that cluster about the piano and, in their portrayal of pleasure and pain, exemplify some of the concomitants of the power of sound, some of the attitudes engendered alike in the agent and the recipient’ (*LCI*: 891).

<sup>47</sup> John Ruskin, *Praeterita*, ed. by Francis O’Gorman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 220.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 317.

heads on Sunday 23 May 1858 (Figure 1), below which he writes, on 24 Feb 1868, that '[t]his drawing of Orchises was the first I ever made on Sunday: and marks, henceforward, the beginning of a total change in habits of mind.'<sup>49</sup> 'Wholly right', the phrase picked up by James's ear, connotes both discriminatory accuracy and moral correctness, marking the discovery that a careful attention to the precise delineation of a flower might itself constitute a moral activity rather than merely an escape from one. As James writes of Tintoretto (just before citing Ruskin himself), 'his indefatigable hand never drew a line that was not, as one may say, a moral line' (*TS*: 91).

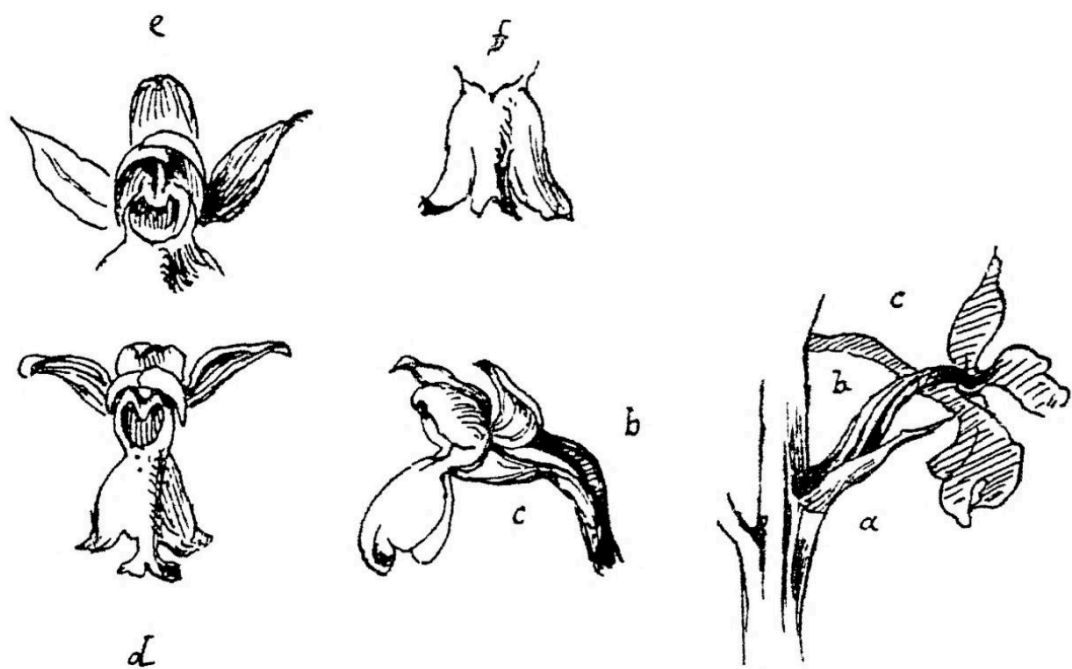


Figure 1. Ruskin's 'Drawing of Orchises'.

<sup>49</sup> Joan Evans and John Howard Whitehouse, eds, *The Diaries of John Ruskin: 1848-1874* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 535.

Ruskin's 'beginning of a total change in habits of mind' can also be understood as a 'turning point', to use the term used by a 'distinguished friend' of James's in 1909 (probably William Dean Howells) when remarking that 'every man's life had had its "turning-point", and that there were cases, particular lives, as to which some account of what had turned on it, and how and why the turn had come, couldn't fail to be interesting' (CN: 437). These phrases are taken from 'The Turning Point of My Life', a fragment of an essay by James which remained unpublished until long after his death and which exists in an ambiguous position between revelation and reticence; on the one hand it recognises the 'thrill known to those who have felt the ground made firm for talking about themselves', who know how it is 'well enough to talk, overflowing, of the things one had thrown off and that seem to have ceased to be part of oneself' (CN: 438). On the other, it recognises that the 'real bliss of publication, I make out, must be for those one has kept in', 'if they have at all richly accumulated and are too tightly packed to be gouged out (or, to put it more delicately, too shy or proud to consent to be touched)' (CN: 438). James looks back upon his own life and considers the possibility of the

appearance of one of the momentous junctures in question; occasions of the taking of the ply that is never again to be lost, occasions of the true vocation or the right opportunity recognised more or less in a flash, determinations in short of character and purpose, and above all of a sharper and finer consciousness (CN: 437).

'Sharper and finer consciousness' suggests that these turning points represent moments of refinement as well as edification (see Chapter 2). Moreover, whilst these 'momentous junctures' might be perceived 'more or less in a flash', they are occasions that are 'never again to be lost', paradoxically combining evanescence and permanence (see Chapter 3). Percy Lubbock's *The Craft of Fiction* (1921) was perhaps the first to identify these 'flashes' of recognition, whereby a totality of



relations is suddenly revealed to the protagonist, and ‘great hidden facts [pass] into the possession of the reader whole’.<sup>50</sup> Whilst we may be quick to challenge the supposed cohesive totality in such revelatory moments, this need not deny the paradoxical sudden breaking-in of apparently complete knowledge in a single instant even as we recognise the prolonged and often protracted process of coming to terms with that fact.<sup>51</sup> Conversion frequently occurs in James’s writing over longer, more extended periods of time (Chad’s perceived alteration at the hands of Madame de Vionnet, or the transformation of various couples in *The Sacred Fount*, the subject of the extravagantly elaborate suppositions of the narrator). Such turning points also occasionally appear entirely illusory: the arrival of the Pococks makes Strether question whether or not Chad has changed at all, as well as making the reader realise that they have been seeing through Strether’s eyes all along. This conversion may derive from the spectator, rather than identifying a change in the subject themselves (*CFHJ* XVIII: 315). The ‘complete drama’ of Madame Merle’s vocal modulation indicates that turning points can be profoundly enigmatic as well as powerfully revelatory, withholding as much they reveal.

Early in *The Sacred Fount* (1901), when the narrator meets Gilbert Long and is shocked at his transformation from crudity to refinement, Long’s metamorphosis is powerfully audible in his intonation:

The riddle, I may mention, sounded afresh to my ear in Gilbert Long’s gay voice; it hovered there – before me, beside me, behind me, as we all paused – in his light, restless step, a nervous animation that seemed to multiply his presence. [...] The note of Long’s predominance deepened during these minutes in a manner I can’t describe, and I continued to feel that though we pretended to talk it was to him only we listened. He had us all in hand; he controlled for the moment all our attention and our relations. He was in short, as a consequence of our attitude, in possession of the scene to a tune he couldn’t have dreamed of a year or two before – inasmuch as at that period he

---

<sup>50</sup> Percy Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 62.

<sup>51</sup> See Kate Stanley, *Practices of Surprise in American Literature after Emerson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 91.

could have figured as no such eminence without making a fool of himself. (*SF*: 14-15)

Mrs Brissenden has instructed the narrator to look to Lady John as the ‘answer to our riddle’ (*SF* 14): ‘she has given him, steadily, more and more intellect’ (*SF*: 10). Long’s tone captures the enigma that obsesses the narrator and augments into an obsession: ‘[h]e became really, for the moment, under this impression, the thing I was most conscious of’ (*SF*: 14). This ‘predominance’ is attributed to Long rather than the listening ear, and like a virtuoso performer or conductor, he ‘had us all in hand’ and ‘controlled for the moment all our attention and our relations’ (*SF*: 15).<sup>52</sup> ‘[T]o a tune’ conveys the way that a tune might itself ‘make a scene’ (*SBOC*: 152), as well as the hypnotic control that tone exerts.

One rhythm catches the ear here: Long’s tone ‘hovered there – before me, beside me, behind me’, conveying the manner in which it encircles the narrator, disorientating and enclosing him, taking control of him. It seems to multiply Long’s presence whilst also conveying the fidgety, restless, and anxious momentum the enigma and origin of his transformation accrues. The rhythm of ‘before him, beside him, behind him’ catches James’s ear too, and he often invokes it at moments of intense moral crisis or metamorphosis. It becomes a kind of rhythmic leitmotif that ghosts or haunts James’s prose, one to which he keeps returning, and which keeps returning to him. When Nick Dormer achieves public office after apparently forgoing his passion for painting in *The Tragic Muse*, he becomes aware of the backstage influence exerted by Julia Dallow to help him achieve it (she had previously been ‘too near for him to see her separate from himself’ (*TM* I: 287-88)):

when Nick came to his senses, after the proclamation of the victor and the cessation of the noise, her figure was, of all the queer phantasmagoria, the most substantial thing that survived. She had been always there, passing, repassing, returning, before him, beside him, behind him. (*TM* I: 288)

---

<sup>52</sup> Such control might be compared with the mesmerising effect of the piano ‘player’s spell’ (*SF*: 164-65).

Because each word in the phrase ‘passing, repassing, returning’ contains an element of the previous one within it, its rhythm provides the sense of a single material transforming or evolving out of its own energy: a carrying over that is also a preservation. The texture then changes into a more emphatically regular pattern sounded in the pedal note of its prefixes: ‘before him, beside him, behind him’. The momentum this effects makes it sound, briefly, as though this rhythm might never stop, or that, like Long’s ‘light, nervous step’, the multiplication of Julia’s presence might expand into a ‘still larger fact’ (*TM* I: 287-88). For Nick, Julia’s constancy is an image that ‘looked large as it rose before him’, and the ‘whole impression, that night, had kept him much awake’ (*TM* I: 289). In both novels, the transformation conveys an abiding uncertainty about the nature and degree of unconscious *influence*, which either creates an irreversible conversion of the self or, in Nick’s mind, an indissoluble ethical conflict between life and art, politics and painting. James sounds the depths of consciousness by foregrounding a non-verbal or paralinguistic expressivity that works upon us and his protagonists alike in ways that may be only partially apprehended.

Equally imperceptible but no less determinant is the allusion to Robert Browning’s *Pippa Passes* (1841). Jules, the sculptor, addresses Phene, who is not the refined woman of high social standing the eloquence of her forged letters have led him to believe. Jules asks how he can possibly pursue his work as a sculptor when the ‘live’ truth, Phene, should be so relentlessly present:

Will they, my fancies, live near you, my truth –  
The live truth – passing and repassing me –  
Sitting beside me?

This conflict between art and life is registered through the modulation of the voicing of ‘live’ from a verb to an adjective, from the ‘fancies’ being that which lives, to Phene being the truth whose life is its animating principle (the ability of the putatively insubstantial to exert a transfixing power is similarly evoked by the word ‘fancies’). The anxiety conveyed by the ‘passing, repassing’ of Phene will only be solved by the ‘passing’ of Pippa herself, with whom such an action is particularly associated. Unknown to herself, Pippa’s passing and her song bring about a turning point in Jules’s own life, a sudden epiphanic moral awareness; he decides to stay with Phene and abstain from revenge, despite the prank that has been played on him by his students. The resolution of the various ethical dilemmas depends upon the evanescence of Pippa passing, the exquisiteness of her tone and gesture transforming the lives she passes.

When this rhythm appears in James, it similarly conveys the imperceptible path of someone capable of unwittingly exercising a profound and permanent influence on the lives of others. James not only alludes to but *amplifies* Browning’s phrase to make it even more extravagantly rhythmic: ‘passing and repassing me [...] sitting beside me’ becomes ‘passing, repassing, returning, before him, beside him, behind him’ in *The Tragic Muse*, or ‘before me, beside me, behind me’ when used to describe Long’s intonation. In various ways, the rhythm conveys a seemingly insuperable moral conflict. However, in Browning’s poem, the moral crisis between life and art is resolved, and whilst Nick does propose to Julia the next day, this is

---

<sup>53</sup> Robert Browning, *Pippa Passes*, in *Selected Poems*, p. 124. James does refer to the poem in ‘The Late Mrs Arthur Bronson’, *The Critic*, XL (February 1902), 162-64 (164). Julia Dallow’s ponies also ‘had worked, with all the rest, for the week before, passing and repassing the neat windows of the flat little town’ (*TM* I: 257), and Browning’s presence is further reinforced by the subsequent reference to a ‘generous steed [that] had been sacrificed to bring the good news from Ghent to Aix’ (*TM* I: 258), alluding to Browning’s ‘How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix’, in *Selected Poems*, pp. 220-25. The phrase, ‘passing and re-passing’, or ‘passing and repassing’, appears elsewhere in James’s writing (*GB*: 297; *TMa*: 92).

merely an extorted reconciliation, with the effect of propounding rather than resolving his ethical conflict. The phrase thus provides one concentrated instance of a ‘turning point’ at the level of intonation, so important in the autobiographical contexts of James or Ruskin, as that which conveys an irreversible conversion or the resolution of a formerly irresolvable antagonism, whose originating force may remain to some degree invisible or imperceptible. This conversion, moreover, refuses the false choice between saying and doing with which this chapter began, since in these moments tone is itself an ‘act’, in both senses of the word.

#### 1.4 Tone Touchstones

Whilst the ‘auditive intelligence’ clearly emerges from a specifically theatrical context, its implications extend far beyond James’s own complicated and changing relationship with the stage to include his own fiction too, not least when James himself compares the art of the actor to the art of the novelist:

There is something in the way M. Coquelin goes through this long and elaborate part, all of fine shades and minute effects, all appearing to the finest observation as well as displaying it, which reminds one of the manner in which the writer of a “psychological” novel (when he knows how to write as well as M. Coquelin knows how to act) builds up a character, in his supposedly uncanny process – with touch added to touch, line to line, and a vision of his personae breathing before him. M. Coquelin is really the Balzac of actors. (‘Coquelin’ (1887): 333)

James often used the figure of Balzac for creative self-definition,<sup>54</sup> and to be the ‘Balzac of actors’ is praise indeed if, as James writes in ‘The Lesson of Balzac’ (1905), the French novelist is ‘the father of us all’, providing the best ‘lesson’ for those who wish to recover the novel’s ‘wasted heritage’ (*LC2*: 120). Of all James’s fictions, *The Tragic Muse* is the one where the arguments outlined in ‘Coquelin’ (1887) are most explicitly apparent. The voice coach Madame Carré is herself

---

<sup>54</sup> James described Kipling as an ‘English Balzac’ in a letter to Grace Norton, 25 December 1897 (*HJL* IV: 70).

described by Peter Sherringham as “‘the Balzac as one may say, of actresses’”, responding to Gabriel Nash’s admission that he reads “‘La Cousine Bette’” instead of attending plays (*TM* I: 74).<sup>55</sup> Miriam Rooth’s voice also has a ‘quality’ that causes Peter Sherringham to exclaim that “[e]very now and then you ‘say’ something – !” (*NYE* VII: 158),<sup>56</sup> and this ‘saying’ is also accompanied by Miriam’s opposition to the pictorial trend for scenery.<sup>57</sup> Sherringham even thinks Miriam capable of “‘sav[ing]’” (*TM* I: 230) the British theatre: “[t]here is something to be done for [the theatre in our country], and perhaps mademoiselle is the person to do it” (*TM* I: 131). He also advises her to make her name first in the French theatre and only then go to Britain: “[s]tudy here, and go to London to appear” (*TM* I: 138).<sup>58</sup> For Nash, the “‘theatre in our countries is puerile and barbarous’” (*TM* I: 131),<sup>59</sup> an attitude not only recalling James’s own, but which, as D.J. Goode and John Stokes observe, ‘may

---

<sup>55</sup> ‘Balzac loved his Valérie then as Thackeray did not love his Becky [...] All his impulse was to *la faire valoir*, to give her all her value’ (*LC*2: 132). This alludes to the statement “‘Balzac aime sa Valérie’” in Taine’s ‘great essay – so much the finest thing ever written on our author’ (*LC*2: 131). Hippolyte Taine, ‘Thackeray’, in *Essais de Critique et d’Histoire* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1858), pp. 149-214 (p. 196). Gabriel Nash, arch-sceptic of the theatre and Wildean aesthete (despite conspicuously avoiding admitting this label or ‘formula’ to Nick Dormer’s sister, Biddy (*TM* I: 35)), even offers the ‘substitute’ for this formula, adding that the Balzac of actresses must be “[t]he miniaturist, as it were, of whitewashers!” (*TM* I: 74) in opposition to the broad brushstrokes of a culture unable to do more with a ‘character, with an idea, with a feeling’ than a ‘gross, rough sketch’ of them (*TM* I: 73).

<sup>56</sup> The 1890 Houghton edition reads: ‘[h]er voice had a quality, as she uttered these words, which made him exclaim, “[e]very now and then you say something – !”’ (*TM* I: 171).

<sup>57</sup> “‘Oh, I hate scenery!’” (*TM* I: 375).

<sup>58</sup> James might have based this aspect of Miriam on Geneviève Ward, who had studied at the Théâtre Française before coming to Britain. Horne credits John Goode for this point, in “‘Where Did She Get Hold of That?’: Shakespeare in Henry James’s *The Tragic Muse*”, in *Victorian Shakespeare, Volume 2: Literature and Culture*, ed. by Gail Marshall and Adrian Poole (London: Macmillan, 2003), pp. 100-13 (p. 101). ‘[T]he most interesting actress in London’ James declares in ‘The London Theatres’ (1881), Ward had ‘a finish, an intelligence, a style, an understanding of what she is about, which are as agreeable as they are rare’ (*CWAD*2: 269).

<sup>59</sup> Nash earlier denounces the ‘essentially brutal nature of the modern audience’ (*TM* I: 72).

be said then to amount to a compendium of pre-existing, but still controversial, opinions that were French in origin but known in England'.<sup>60</sup>

Whilst this compendium quality encourages us to read *The Tragic Muse* alongside 'Coquelin' (1887), and as anticipating the revised text, many critics have objected to the novel's own 'compendium' quality; its extensive allusion to debates surrounding the theatre, along with its excessive length, for many constitutes one of the novel's chief failings (responses partly derived from James's own ambivalences about this novel).<sup>61</sup> Critics seeking to avoid overemphasising the work's 'ideas' have described it as 'a painterly novel', drawing on the titular allusion to 'Reynolds's portrait, Mrs Siddons as "The Tragic Muse"'.<sup>62</sup> At best, the emphasis on the visual arts has been understood to enter into tension with the dramatic, but this risks casting

---

<sup>60</sup> Goode and Stokes, 'The Reference', in *The Air of Reality*, ed. by Goode, p. 150; specifically the debate between the 'raffinés' and the polemics of the 1880's, such as George Moore's 'Mummer-Worship' (1888), where the actor's art is dismissed as "'parasitic", requiring no intelligence', in Goode and Stokes, 'The Reference', p. 147.

<sup>61</sup> Leon Edel characterises the work as coldly didactic, review of Lyall H. Powers, *Henry James and the Naturalist Movement* (1971), *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 26 (1971-72), 498-99 (499), and in his 'Introduction' to *The Tragic Muse* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), pp. vii-xvii (p. xiv). Mark Seltzer dismisses the work as 'an inventory of aesthetic and political modes of representation, and their entanglement', p. 155. Others dismiss the work's length: Donald David Stone, *Novelists in a Changing World: Meredith, James, and the Transformation of English Fiction in the 1880's* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 328; J. I. M. Stewart, *Eight Modern Writers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 98. Such responses owe much to James's own anxieties, such as his description of the work as 'longish' in a letter to Frederick Macmillan (*HJL* III: 238), or as 'the long thing I am doing for the *Atlantic*' to William, that grows to 'my interminable novel' (*HJL* III: 243, 300); in a letter to Robert Louis Stevenson James mentions his 'fearfully long-winded but very highly-finished novel' (*HJL* III: 279), cited by Judith E. Funston in "'All Art Is One": Narrative Techniques in Henry James's *Tragic Muse*', *Studies in the Novel*, 15 (1983), 344-55. James confesses that 'for fear of making it [*The Tragic Muse*'s subject] too small I have made it too big' and invokes Maupassant to inspire him with '[v]ariety and concision' (*CN*: 48). The novel's 'Preface' apologies for having lost the novel's 'germ' and ends with an admission of the failure of Nick Dormer (*LC2*: 1103, 1118).

<sup>62</sup> Robert Falk, 'The *Tragic Muse*: Henry James's Loosest, Baggiest Novel?', in *Themes and Directions in American Literature, Essays in Honor of Leon Howard*, ed. by Ray B. Browne and Donald Pizer (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1969), pp. 148-62 (p. 152).

*The Tragic Muse* as little more than a transitional work, culminating James's early 'painterly' fiction and anticipating the 'dramatic' later works.<sup>63</sup>

However, *The Tragic Muse* 'is not programmatic or abstractly intellectual' since it 'flows into, and is altered by, the plots and situations, the psychologies and histories, of [James's] characters'.<sup>64</sup> The novel's sustained exploration of the tests of tone is evident in the depiction of Miriam's ambition to achieve an auditive intelligence under the tutelage of the sage of the acting profession, Madame Carré, watching whom is described as 'an education of the taste, an enlargement of one's knowledge' (*TM* I: 72). On the 'eve of production' before Miriam's great arrival on the English stage, Peter is struck by the way that everyone was 'awaiting the test and the response, the echo to be given back by the big, receptive, artless, stupid, delightful public' (*TM* II: 669).<sup>65</sup> Miriam, having made some last minute changes to her act, seeks to test her tone on Peter before he announces his departure: 'she wanted a touchstone, wanted a fresh ear, and, as she told Sherringham when he went behind after the first act, that was why she had insisted on this private trial, to which a few fresh ears were to be admitted' (*NYE* VIII: 242).<sup>66</sup> As it transpires, however, 'Sherringham saw that though she wanted a fresh ear and a fresh eye she was liable to tell those who possessed these advantages that they didn't know what they were talking about' (*TM* II: 672). The 'touchstone' is not only the means of testing tone; tone is itself conceived of as a touchstone, as a kind of 'standard' against which utterances might be tested or measured, embodying the kind of edifying point of reference which, as Madame Carré suggests, is 'above all better taught' in the French theatre (*NYE* VII: 123).

---

<sup>63</sup> Funsten, 354. See also William R. Goetz, 'The Allegory of Representation in *The Tragic Muse*', *Journal of Narrative Technique*, 8 (1978), 151-64.

<sup>64</sup> Philip Horne, 'Introduction' to *The Tragic Muse*, ed. by Philip Horne (London: Penguin, 1995), pp. vii-xxix (p. vii).

<sup>65</sup> James subsequently described Coquelin's 'corrupting contact with the public' as the 'test' that 'our American conditions have in their dread power to apply!' ('Coquelin' (1915): 545).

<sup>66</sup> The first edition calls it a 'touching-stone' (*TM* II: 670).



When Peter says that Miriam is the person capable of transforming the fortunes of the English theatre, Madame Carré asks, if this is true, what the theatre might be able to do for her. Peter responds by saying that it will do “anything that I can help it to do”, to which ‘the old actress’ responds:

“Ah, if your part is marked out, I congratulate you, mademoiselle!” said the old actress, underlining the words as she had often underlined such words on the stage. She smiled with large permissiveness on the young aspirant, who appeared not to understand her. Her tone penetrated, however, to certain depths in the mother’s nature, adding another stir to agitated waters.

“I feel the responsibility of what she shall find in the life, the standards, of the theatre,” Mrs Rooth explained. “Where is the purest tone – where are the highest standards? that’s what I ask,” the good lady continued, with a persistent candor which elicited a peal of unceremonious but sociable laughter from Gabriel Nash.

“The purest tone – *qu’est-ce-que-c’est que ça?*” Madame Carré demanded, in the finest manner of modern comedy. (*TM I*: 131-32)

The appeal to the ‘purity’ of tone is easily mocked, and the joke rebounds upon Mrs Rooth; Madame Carré’s response, delivered ‘in the finest manner of modern comedy’, informs Mrs Rooth that she is now in the presence of the very ‘standard’ for which she has been searching, at the same time as her ‘persistent candor’ is exposed.<sup>67</sup> The absence of a touchstone animates Peter’s subsequent complaint that “no one cares; the sense is gone – it isn’t in the public [...]. Purity of speech, on our stage, doesn’t exist. Every one speaks as he likes, and audiences never notice; it’s the last thing they think of.” (*TM I*: 222) Miriam asks whether he means “the grand manner, certain pompous pronunciations, the style of the Kembles”, to which he replies: “I mean any style that *is* a style, that is a system, an art, that contributes a positive beauty to utterance. When I pay ten shillings to hear you speak, I want you to know how, *que diable!*” (*TM I*: 223) Recalling Dorriforth’s objections to Wagner in ‘After the Play’, Peter adds that he sometimes thinks that

---

<sup>67</sup> Later changed to ‘misguided intensity’ (*NYE VII*: 123).

“the personal art *is* at an end, and that henceforth we shall have only the arts – capable, no doubt, of immense development in their way (indeed they have already reached it) – of the stage-carpenter and the costumer. In London the drama is already smothered in scenery; the interpretation scrambles off as it can.” (*TM* I: 223)

The ‘tone-standard’ (*QS*: 12, 13, 16, 35) allows for the recognition of Peter’s “‘positive beauty’”, as James writes of the ‘units’ of tone that are ‘emphasized or unemphasized’ and ‘coming in *for* value and subject to be marked or missed, honored or dishonored – to use the term we use for checks at banks – as a note of sound’ (*QS*: 20-21). ‘Note’, of course, puns on two desiderata, money and music, suggesting the intimate relations between economic and cultural capital in any given hierarchy of taste. The repeated invocations of the ‘tone-standard’ (punning on the idea of the ‘gold standard’) connote a fixed level of refinement from which all judgements of intonation can be valued accordingly. To understand tone as a touchstone in the sense of a ‘standard’, in the sense invoked by Mrs Rooth or Peter Sherringham, is to understand it as an index of collective as well as individual improvement.

The connection between ‘tone’ and the ‘touchstone’ is made in James’s 1893 review of the *Correspondance de Gustave Flaubert*:

But if subjects were made for style (as to which Flaubert had a rigid theory: the idea was good enough if the expression was), so style was made for the ear, the last court of appeal, the supreme touchstone of perfection. He was perpetually demolishing his periods in the light of his merciless *gueulades*. He tried them on every one; his *gueulades* could make him sociable. (*LC*2: 311)

James’s argument operates by means of a kind of rhetorical *gradiatio* or *anadiplosis*: subjects are made for style, style is made for the ear, and the ear is the ‘last court of appeal’, which in turn is the ‘supreme touchstone’ (the supreme court being the final court of appeal). Flaubert ‘tried’ these utterances on everyone (continuing the legal metaphor), and this is done without granting clemency. The curiosity that this kind of

testing of that which ‘passed muster’ could ‘make him sociable’ (*LC2*: 311) is comprehensible if the touchstone is understood as a means of provoking the auditor into a critical independence of mind learned from repeated contact with others. As James writes in ‘The Question of Our Speech’:

Of the degree in which a society is civilized the vocal form, the vocal tone, the personal, social accent and sound of its intercourse, have always been held to give a direct reflection. That sound, that vocal form, the touchstone of manners, is the note, the representative note – representative of its having (in our poor, imperfect human degree) achieved civilization (*QS*: 11-12).<sup>68</sup>

By claiming that tone is the ‘touchstone of manners’ and a ‘symbol of education’, James evokes the Arnoldian vocabulary of pedagogical reform. In ‘The Study of Poetry’, Arnold proposed that central literary ‘touchstones’— representative passages culled from Shakespeare, Goethe, Homer, the Bible, amongst others, are the condition for a democratic cultural intelligence. However, the Arnoldian touchstone is vulnerable to the challenge that it creates an ‘ideological vacuum’ into which rushes the ‘cult of personality’ it sought to oppose.<sup>69</sup> James was aware of the possible drawbacks and risks a ‘touchstone of taste’ might create.<sup>70</sup> But just as care need not necessarily entail coercion, so too might the touchstone function as a principle of preservation and education. For David Russell, the Arnoldian touchstone is ‘for our evocation, not our veneration’, and is thus not a way of deciding what was good for people, but a way of letting them try out for themselves, providing ideas without fixed ideals.<sup>71</sup> The touchstones of literary value provided by education are by no

---

<sup>68</sup> James later reemphasises the centrality of the ‘touchstone’: ‘the touchstone of manners, as I have called our question’ (*QS*: 28).

<sup>69</sup> Herbert Tucker, ‘Arnold and the Authorisation of Criticism’, in *Knowing the Past: Victorian Literature and Culture*, ed. by Suzy Anger (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 117.

<sup>70</sup> For Dorothea Krook, the ‘touchstone of taste’ in *The Golden Bowl* represents precisely this kind of coercive ideal of civility, one that Maggie must eventually transcend, *The Ordeal of Consciousness in Henry James* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 268.

<sup>71</sup> David Russell, *Tact: Aesthetic Liberalism and the Essay Form in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), p. 92.

means canonical works or ‘set texts’, and much more like trials or tests of experience and feeling. James transforms Arnold to imply that tone can be a touchstone capable of preserving theatrical standards and measuring their success through repeated contact; tone itself of course sounds within ‘touchstone’.<sup>72</sup>

In *The Tragic Muse*, the absence of a touchstone is initially far more conspicuous than its presence. When Gabriel Nash, objecting to ““this idiotic new fashion of the drawing-room recitation”” (*TM* I: 141), mischievously arranges a hearing of Miriam, he assumes it will confirm his prejudice about her lack of ability. ““The great model [Madame Carré]””, he believes, ““will find her very bad”” (*TM* I: 65). This is Miriam’s first ‘trial’ or ‘test’, and when she performs ‘the fine interview with Célie’ (*TM* I: 137) from Émile Augier’s *L’Aventurière* (1848), it is with a tone hardly capable of reviving the conditions of the British theatre: ‘a long, strong, colorless voice came quavering from her young throat’ with a ‘rude monotony’ and ‘an effort at modulation which was not altogether successful and which evidently she felt not to be so’ (*TM* I: 137).

So they went on through the scene, and when it was over it had not precisely been a triumph for Miriam Rooth. Sherringham forebore to look at Gabriel Nash, and Madame Carré said: “I think you’ve a voice, *ma fille*, somewhere or other. We must try and put our hand on it.” (*TM* I: 137)

Miriam’s ‘quavering’ voice evokes those scenes discussed above where the scrutiny of tone becomes emblematic of certain ethical, psychological, and aesthetic failings.<sup>73</sup> Miriam’s failing derives from the slavishness of her imitation; when she ‘rolled out a fragment of one of the splendid conversations of Musset’s poet with the muse – rolled it loudly and proudly, tossed it and tumbled it about the room’, we are told that

---

<sup>72</sup> In ‘The London Theaters’ (1881), James alludes to older actors for whom a ‘long course of histrionic gymnastics was thought indispensable, and from which a touchstone of accomplishment was the art of delivering the great Shakespearian speeches’ (*CWAD*2: 252).

<sup>73</sup> ‘So they went on through the scene’ is a phrasing similar to ‘[s]o Madame Merle went on’ (*PL*: 530), itself recalled by ‘[s]o the high voice quavered’ (*GB*: 495).

She made a muddle of the divine verses, which, in spite of certain sonorities and cadences, an evident effort to imitate a celebrated actress, a comrade of Madame Carré, whom she had heard declaim them, she produced as if she had but a dim idea of their meaning. (*TM I*: 139)

Colorlessly devoid of all gradations of accent, Peter ‘heard her make four different attempts’ at one particular recitation, and she only ‘uttered these dissimilar compositions in exactly the same tone – a solemn, droning, dragging measure, adopted with an intention of pathos, a crude idea of “style”’ (*TM I*: 140). As Madame Carré responds: “‘I listened to her conscientiously, and I didn’t perceive in what she did a single *nuance*, a single inflexion or intention. But not one, *mon cher*. I don’t think she’s intelligent.”’ (*TM I*: 144) When she hands Miriam the ‘delicate lyrics’ by ‘contemporary poets – all things demanding perfect taste and art, a mastery of tone, of insinuation, in the interpreter’, Miriam ‘gobbled them up’ and ‘gave them forth in the same way as the first, with close, rude, audacious mimicry’ (*TM I*: 210). Miriam’s tone thus possesses ‘no countenance of her own, but only the countenance of the occasion [...] of representative movements’ (*TM I*: 207), merely ‘reproducing with a crude fidelity, but with extraordinary memory, the intonations, the personal quavers and cadences of her model’ (*TM I*: 210).

So extreme is this mimicry that Peter fears that Madame Carré ‘would think she was making fun of her manner’ (*TM I*: 210). ‘When she had finished’, Madame Carré asks, “[s]hould you like now to hear how *you* do it?”’, the emphatic discrimination clarifying the extent to which Miriam has been imitating her (*TM I*: 210).

[W]ithout waiting for an answer, [Madame Carré] phrased and trilled the last of the pieces, from beginning to end, exactly as Miriam had done, making this imitation of an imitation the drollest thing conceivable. If she had been annoyed it was a perfect revenge (*TM I*: 211).<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> Revised to ‘[i]f she had suffered from the sound of the girl’s echo’ (*NYE VII*: 193).

After this, Madame Carré subsequently offers some dispiriting advice to the young aspirant: there are simply some people for whom “shades don’t exist” and who “don’t see certain differences”, adding that she “repeated the thing as you repeat it, as you represent my doing it” in order to “show you a difference” (*TM I*: 211). This kind of imitation is deeply exposing, even if, as Peter generously suggests, Madame Carré’s exasperation betrays a ‘degree of flattery’, conceding ‘a mystifying reality in the girl’ and even a ‘degree of importance.’ (*TM I*: 212)

Rather than an immovable ideal, a touchstone would allow for a relation to a tone characterised by flexibility rather than fixity, a trial which would bring the student of tone to a critical independence of mind liberating them from passivity and enabling them to think for themselves. For Arnold, by operating as a test, the touchstone aims ‘to get the present believers in action, and lovers of political talking and doing, to make a return on their own minds’.<sup>75</sup> Such independence of mind later emerges when we discover the ‘powerful, ample manner in which Miriam handled her scene’ from *King John*. At ‘the Français’, James writes in 1877, ‘you must know how to acquit yourself of a *tirade*; that has always been the touchstone of capacity’ (*CWAD2*: 193). For all Madame Carré’s dissatisfaction, Miriam’s Constance incorporates this French style of acting within the English repertory, just as Sherringham recommended that she study in France first and appear in England afterwards (*TM I*: 138):

Miriam was in the act of rolling out some speech from the English poetic drama –

“For I am sick and capable of fears,  
Oppressed with wrongs and therefore full of fears”

He recognized one of the great tirades of Shakespeare’s Constance, and saw she had just begun the magnificent scene at the beginning of the third act of

---

<sup>75</sup> Matthew Arnold, ‘The Function of Criticism’, *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 184. The phrase ‘return on their own minds’ recalls his admiration of Burke’s ‘return upon himself’, in *ibid.*, p. 35.

King John, in which the passionate, injured mother and widow sweeps in wild organ-tones up and down the scale of her irony and wrath. [...] Sherringham listened intently, he was so arrested by the spirit with which she attacked her formidable verses. He had needed to hear her utter but half a dozen of them to comprehend the long stride she had taken in his absence; they told him that she had leaped into possession of her means. (*TM I*: 364-65)

For Philip Horne, the scene from *King John* becomes one of James's "'points'", a test of his imagination of successful acting'.<sup>76</sup> One way of understanding this scene is as a cultural and literary orientation, a point of reference to guide one's way.<sup>77</sup> The 'point', such an important word for James more generally,<sup>78</sup> also carries a specific theatrical sense on the Victorian stage: a 'moment of intense physical or emotional action which was momentarily frozen in a powerful attitude or tableau – a kind of individualising of the group "picture" that frequently concluded an act' often directed as far downstage as possible and dead center.<sup>79</sup> In this sense, these lines test Miriam's tone as well as James's imagination. When Madame Carré first gives us the sense of just how truly successful intonation can be, speaking 'with intonations as fine as a flute' (*TM I*: 126), we read how:

This accomplished artist had in particular a mouth which was visibly a rare instrument, a pair of lips whose curves and fine corners spoke of a lifetime of "points" unerringly made and verses exquisitely spoken, helping to explain the purity of the sound that issued from them. (*TM I*: 126)

---

<sup>76</sup> Horne, 'Where Did She Get Hold of That?', in *Victorian Shakespeare*, ed. by Marshall and Poole, p. 108.

<sup>77</sup> In his 'Preface' to Samuel Johnson, Arnold recommends 'a certain series of works to serve as what the French, taking an expression from the builder's business, call *points de repère*, – points which stand as so many natural centers, and by returning to which we can always find our way again, if we are embarrassed', in *The Six Chief Lives from Johnson's Lives of the Poets: With Macaulay's Life of Johnson* (London: Macmillan, 1878), pp. vii-xxv (p. ix). George Saintsbury claimed this was itself 'one of the great critical *loci* of the world', *Matthew Arnold* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1899), p. 169.

<sup>78</sup> Herford notes the 'happy coincidence' of 'point' in the 'Preface' to *The Spoils of Poynton* and the 'contained glee' with which 'Poynton' emerges from the geographical localities of 'Point Hill', *Retrospect*, p. 200.

<sup>79</sup> Michael R. Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 125.

The ‘great childish audience’ are also described as ‘gaping at [Miriam’s] points’ (*TM* II: 870). After leaping into the sudden possession of her means, we are told that there was an ‘instinctive art in the way [Miriam] added touch to touch and made point upon point. She was so quiet, to oblige her painter, that only her fine lips moved – all her expression was in their charming utterance’ (*TM* II: 750). This recalls how Coquelin, himself described as ‘fairly trumpeting his “points”’ (‘Coquelin’ (1887): 325), not only adds ‘touch to touch’, but possesses an auditive intelligence comprised ‘of fine shades and pointed particulars’ (Coquelin (1887): 333). Like the ‘touchstone’, the ‘point’ thus situates a moment of dramatic intensity, general exemplarity, and a potential ‘test’, at the level of tone.

Yet the passage from *King John* (II.2) where Salisbury has to tell Constance that her French king has struck a deal with John, much to her chagrin, is in many ways an unusual ‘point’ to mark the moment when Miriam ‘puts her hand’ on her voice. Basil Dashwood himself raises doubts about the play and its suitability for the playgoing audience (“‘[i]’m afraid they don’t want King John”), whilst Madame Carré complains that unlike Corneille’s ‘imprecations’, Constance ‘rails like a fish-wife’ (*TM* I: 371). Constance, however, was the great role of Sarah Siddons, painted by Joshua Reynolds as ‘The Tragic Muse’, and as critics have noted, Siddons herself wrote a treatise on the character of Constance; the reading of *King John* thus ‘connect[s] Miriam to the heart of the English theatrical tradition’.<sup>80</sup>

For Christopher Ricks, the passage is not just exemplary for these reasons, but for demonstrating how writing might ‘positively control tone’.<sup>81</sup> This is a response to the *OED*’s definition of tone as a ‘particular quality, pitch, modulation, or inflexion of the voice expressing or indicating affirmation, interrogation, hesitation, decision, or some feeling or emotion; vocal expression’, a definition that leaves unresolved

---

<sup>80</sup> Horne, ‘Where Did She Get Hold of That?’, in *Victorian Shakespeare*, ed. by Marshall and Poole, p. 108.

<sup>81</sup> Christopher Ricks, *T.S. Eliot and Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 133.



how exactly ‘an inflexion of the voice could express something without indicating it or indicate it without expressing it’.<sup>82</sup> Because these lines end with the same word (“‘fears’”), indeed the same pair of words (“‘of fears’”), the placement of emphasis is, Ricks argues, beyond doubt, conveying a ‘power obdurate in its corruption’ in the face of Constance’s ‘cry for justice’.<sup>83</sup> This conveys a tension between an ‘irresistible force and an immovable object’, a ‘contrariety made real in the tone of an anguished voice’,<sup>84</sup> or, we might say, a Tennysonian ‘contradiction on the tongue’.

However, Ricks makes it sound as though Miriam’s tone were decided well in advance of the speaker: ‘the lines have their vocal stage directions so unmistakably built in, have their tone so indubitably awaiting vocal realization’.<sup>85</sup> This ‘building in’ of tone suggests a different kind of theatrical edification than the ‘building in’ of pictorialism, especially when, as Ricks writes elsewhere, decisions of tone are themselves decisions of action.<sup>86</sup> However, Miriam does *not* choose those dramatic passages where ‘vocal stage directions are unmistakably built in’; instead she ‘listened to herself with an ear as vigilant as if she had been a Paganini drawing a fiddle-bow’ (*TM* I: 365). As she says early on, ‘[s]he wanted to do what was most difficult’ because ‘there were two kinds of scenes and speeches: those which acted themselves, of which the treatment was plain, the only way, so that you had just to take it; and those which were open to interpretation, with which you had to fight every step’ (*TM* I: 212). Ricks’s account suggests Miriam’s speech belongs with the former, but our attention is drawn to ‘the art with which she surmounted [the lines] difficulties, the liberality with which she met its great demand upon the voice, and the variety of expression that she threw into a torrent of objurgation’ (*TM* I: 368).

---

<sup>82</sup> Ricks, *Prejudice*, p. 133.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 134-35.

<sup>86</sup> ‘[T]he dramatic is animated either by building stage directions in or by positively building them out. The posture proper to the sentence is one kind, a tonal kind, of stage direction’, *ibid.*, p. 159.

Miriam's success comes from the force of her delivery of Shakespeare's lines, but Shakespeare's lines are not the reason for her success. She chooses the lines *because* of the test they demand of her tone, which in turn facilitates the independence of mind the touchstone promotes.

Ricks might be defended if we understand the test posed by these lines to reside within their fixed stress, rather than in any decisions of tone made by their speaker. But whilst their intonational cadence is largely determined by repetition, ending on the same word, “fears”, does not necessarily mean that the stress must always fall on it either. It is just as likely that, for example, as the voice picks ‘its way across the red-hot stones’ of its prosodic cues,<sup>87</sup> “fears” remains unstressed precisely because of its repetition, producing a series of discriminations: “capable of fears”; “therefore *full* of fears”; “born to fears”, “subject to fears” (emphasis added). The ‘sun’ of Miriam’s ‘talent had risen above the hills’ (*TM* I: 364), but cues for tone are not indubitable in the same way as the laws of cosmology.

Moreover, we might challenge the assumption that Miriam’s intonation wholly derives from Shakespeare’s lines, an assumption that not only fails to recognize their test of tone, but also overlooks the extent to which *her* tone gains a degree of independence from words alone. For Peter, ‘Miriam’s performance was a living thing, with a power to change, to grow, to develop, to beget new forms of the same life’ (*TM* II: 552-53). Peter’s care for Miriam’s performance resembles a kind

---

<sup>87</sup> Ricks, *Prejudice*, p. 134.

of parental solicitude for a child's developing autonomy.<sup>88</sup> Her performance itself resembles a kind of organic procreativity, with its 'intonations that would have more beauty or make the words mean more (*TM* II: 553). Even Gabriel Nash subsequently wants to 'treat his ear to the sound (the richest then to be heard on earth, as he maintained) issuing from Miriam's lips', believing that the 'richness' of Miriam's tone 'was quite independent of the words she might pronounce or the poor fable they might subserve' (*TM* II: 563).<sup>89</sup>

The touchstone establishes this kind of independence, and we might note the associated connections between tone and the art of handling or repeated contact. Miriam requires the 'right touch' as well as the 'rare shade' (*NYE* VII: 192),<sup>90</sup> and, after her performance of *King John*, Peter marvels at her miraculous transformation, describing her voice as something she has finally grasped:

"Where did she get hold of that – where did she get hold of that?" Sherringham wondered while his whole sense vibrated. "She hadn't got hold of it when I

---

<sup>88</sup> In a letter of 9 December 1884, James complained that the ending of Mary Augusta Ward's *Miss Bretherton* (London: Macmillan, 1884), a work which inspired *The Tragic Muse*, failed in its depiction of the inaccessible autonomy of the artist. James was 'capable of wishing that the actress might have been carried away from Kendal altogether, carried away by the current of her artistic life, the sudden growth of her power, and the excitement, the ferocity and egotism (those of the artist reali[z]ing success, I mean [...])' (*HJL* III: 59). James's *Notebook* entry for 19 June 1884, records his interest in exploring Mrs Kemble's theory that the dramatic gift is 'a thing by itself', where the 'histrionic character' 'goes beyond' the 'man who loves the stage' and 'soars away and is lost to him' (*CN*: 28). Denis Diderot's *Paradoxe du comédien* is an important source for this commitment to the inaccessible autonomy of the artistic self, translated by Walter Herries Pollack in 1883 with an influential preface by Henry Irving, and which shaped discussion about the relation of the actor to the part they played. For Diderot, the closer the actor's identification with their role, the less successful their art became, *The Paradox of Acting*, trans. by Walter Herries Pollock (London: Chatto and Windus, 1883).

<sup>89</sup> Coquelin's tone occasionally made its 'auditor' feel 'as if it were running away with him – taking a holiday, performing antics and gyrations on its own account. The only reproach it would ever occur to me to make to the possessor of it is that he perhaps occasionally loses the idea while he listens to the sound' ('Coquelin' (1887): 327). '[S]ound' is revised to 'form' ('Coquelin' (1915): 537).

<sup>90</sup> This revises the suggestion that lyrics by 'contemporary poets' require a 'mastery of tone' (*TM* I: 210). Miriam conspicuously seems to "coarsen" everything that she "touch[es]" (*TM* I: 211); Madame Carré previously asserts that they must try and "put our hand" on her voice (*TM* I: 137).

went away.” And the assurance flowed over him again that she had found the key to her box of treasures. In the summer, during their weeks of frequent meeting, she had only fumbled with the lock. One October day, while he was away, the key had slipped in, had fitted, or her finger at last had touched the right spring, and the capacious casket had flown open. (*TM* I: 368-69)

The performance of *King John* is here imagined as a key in the sense of a tool used to open a lock, recalling those ‘other specimens of verse to which the old actress [Madame Carré] had handed her the key’ (*TM* I: 210), though at this early stage in Miriam’s career the casket had not yet sprung open. Like the touchstone or tone-standard, the ‘key’ also operates as a kind of index of cultural value, as outlined in ‘The Speech of American Women’:

For everything hangs together, and there are certain perceptions and sensibilities that are a *key* – a key to the inner treasury of consciousness, where all sorts of priceless things abide. Access to these is through those perceptions; so don’t hope that you can just rudely and crudely force the lock. (*HJC*: 78)

‘Key’ is of course a musical metaphor as well as a device to open a lock, specifically the tone or timbre in which people speak. The priceless *bibelots* of the ‘inner treasury of consciousness’ are unlocked by a key only attainable by perceptions enabled by delicacy and taste. James elsewhere compares the clearness of discriminatory vowel-cutting to ‘an art as delicate in its way as gem cutting’ (*QS*: 28). One can only access this treasury via the perceptive sensibility representative of a ‘care for tone’; to try and open the lock by any other means would be to engage in unjustifiable force.<sup>91</sup> Miriam and Coquelin can thus be understood as themselves operating as keys for culture, touchstones or standards against which the Anglo-American ear might

---

<sup>91</sup> In ‘The Speech of American Women’, James inverts this metaphor, so that *speakers*, rather than their tones, are imprisoned by a lack of auditive intelligence. When the female American interlocuter asks why, if they are so very guilty of the “abortive tone”, “people so admire us just as we are” (*HJC*: 80), James responds by saying that they are carrying out a destiny “to the joy of the ironic gods – who have locked you up, as an infatuated, innumerable body, a warning to the rest of the race”, and he doubts whether “within any measurable time, you’ll be able, as an imprisoned mass, to get out” (*HJC*: 81).

discover tone's capacity to be a complete drama, as evident on the French stage.<sup>92</sup>

There is a paradox here: figures such as Coquelin or Miriam are representative figures necessary for larger cultural education, but the kind of intelligence they possess does not derive from schooling alone; it gives rise to exemplarity without itself being necessarily conditioned by it. Madame Carré says that Miriam has “‘learned all I have taught you, but where the devil have you learned what I haven’t taught you?’” (*TM* I: 372). The touchstone, however, embraces this paradoxical relation between general principle and individual instantiation, suggesting a kind of test that brings the speaker to a critical independence through, rather than in spite of, the recourse to exemplarity.

### 1.5 Coda: ‘The Tone of Civilization’

The argument made in this section that Miriam's tone operates as a touchstone providing a standard of culture capable of reforming the English stage, aligning it with the kind of auditive intelligence prevalent in French acting, would appear to defend a conception of progress towards a ‘high’, powerfully Arnoldian, ideal of culture and civilisation.<sup>93</sup> Indeed, for James, the ‘auditive intelligence’ was inseparable from the ‘tone of civilization’ (‘Coquelin’ (1915): 539). For Sarah Blair, Miriam is uniquely placed to effect this cultural transformation,<sup>94</sup> and the novel thus charts the process by which she is ‘transfigured by the end of the novel from *cabotine* to a “productive force”’, free to ‘reinvent a cosmopolitan “consciousness”, “personality”, and cultural idiom by virtue of the racial alterity she has learned

---

<sup>92</sup> R.P. Blackmur argues that Miriam is ‘all objective’ and is ‘the standard or touchstone [...] in the lives of Peter Sherringham and Nick Dormer’, ‘*The Tragic Muse*’, in *Studies in Henry James* (New York: New Directions, 1983), pp. 203-12 (p. 208). Sara Blair reiterates Miriam's ‘absolutely objective character’, *Henry James and The Writing of Race and Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 53, a suggestion drawing on James's own ‘emphasis’ ‘all on an absolutely objective Miriam’ (*LC2*: 1112).

<sup>93</sup> For the assumption that Arnold stands for ‘high culture’, see Richard Salmon, ‘Henry James, Popular Culture, and Cultural Theory’, *HJR*, 19 (1998), 211-18.

<sup>94</sup> ‘Identified as a woman who has no mother tongue, Miriam remains unnaturally free to adopt and adapt the resources of race and nation in a richly cosmopolitan form of cultural theatre’, Blair, p. 138.

resourcefully to manage'.<sup>95</sup> For Jonathan Freedman, however, this projected cultural formation depends upon an opposition between 'barbarism' and 'freedom' in codified racial and sexual terms,<sup>96</sup> and thus the characters try 'to distance themselves from the vulgarity of their own lesser arts, so that Miriam must develop from a 'rough' (*TM* I: 140, 188, 211) and 'rude' artist (*TM* I: 98, 137, 210); her first appearance is 'an image of the monstrosity her aesthetic education will have to dispel'.<sup>97</sup>

The 'tone of civilization', therefore, might all too easily embody a kind of genteel evasiveness supporting a cultural hegemony which suppresses the contradictions of class and gender. This finds perhaps its most notorious formulation in Lionel Trilling's account of 'tone, gesture, emphasis, or rhythm' as 'half-uttered or unuttered or unutterable expressions of value' in 'culture's hum and buzz of implication'.<sup>98</sup> For many critics, such tones amount to a kind of 'avoidance, evasion and privilege', propping up a monolithically uniform conception of 'culture' of which the touchstone would be one instance.<sup>99</sup> However, it is not exactly clear that Miriam *does* wholly signify a triumphalist march of culture towards intonational enlightenment. After all, she 'ends up marrying her manager, consolidating her status as a commodity even in her apotheosis as the "divinest" Juliet' (*TM* I: 870).<sup>100</sup> We

---

<sup>95</sup> Blair, p. 153.

<sup>96</sup> Jonathan Freedman, *Professions of Taste: Henry James, British Aestheticism, and Commodity Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 180-92.

<sup>97</sup> Litvak, p. 252.

<sup>98</sup> Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (London: Secker and Warburg 1951), p. 206.

<sup>99</sup> Mary Ann O'Farrell, 'Manners', in *Henry James in Context*, ed. by McWhirter, pp. 192-202 (p. 194). O'Farrell goes on to note that 'Trilling's recognition, that the subject of manners is not only society at large but also the particularities (tone, gesture, emphasis, rhythm) that constitute participation in the social world, makes it possible to see such particularities as repositories of social knowing', and so '[w]hat goes unsaid, what need not be mentioned, is nevertheless working and ordering, oppressing and prescribing all the time in James', pp. 193, 194. See also, Richard Godden, 'Some Slight Shifts in the Manner of the Novel of Manners', in *Henry James: Fiction as History*, ed. by Ian F. A. Bell (London: Vision Press, 1984), pp. 156-83 (p. 163).

<sup>100</sup> Litvak, p. 268. This recalls what James himself says of Julia: '[s]he tries to seduce him – she is full of bribery' (*CN*: 90).

should therefore be wary of implying that the auditive intelligence simply asserts the superiority of French intelligence over the Anglo-American lack of it, not least because this was James's scepticism as well as our own. Corresponding with Sir Claude Phillips (31 July 1914) in the first of his wartime letters, James writes that the outbreak of war was the terrible price 'the people of this country' must pay for their 'huge materialized stupidity and vulgarity', their lack of 'French intelligence' (*LHJ2*: 390-91).<sup>101</sup> But here James stops himself: the war would prove itself 'interesting' insofar as it confirms his suspicion that there was 'something the matter with my conclusion' (*LHJ2*: 390-91). 'Was something the matter with James's conclusion?', T.J. Lustig asks, '[w]ere the English simply "stupid"? Did thinking necessarily involve deracination?'<sup>102</sup>

Arnold is a figure who helps clarify what the 'tone of civilization' may and may not signify here, especially when French "'culture'" was such an important part of James's 'pursuit of "intelligence"'.<sup>103</sup> However, it is first worth noting the potential differences in James's and Arnold's respective audiences. It would be fair to assume that in 'Coquelin' (1887/1915), the 'public' James had in mind was primarily American, rather than English.<sup>104</sup> This assumption is reinforced by the way 'the auditive intelligence' draws, in the 1915 text, upon James's later essays on the speech and manners of American women. However, because he also develops arguments made in his essays and reviews of English theatre, the public gain something of a composite status, sometimes American, and at others 'Anglo-Saxon'

---

<sup>101</sup> 'There isn't anything like the French intelligence to react [...] representing so much of our *preferred* intelligence' (*LHJ2*: 377).

<sup>102</sup> Lustig is here citing James's aspiration of Sainte-Beuve: to 'acquire something of his intelligence', in his letter to Thomas Sergeant Perry (20 September 1867) (*HJL* I: 77), cited in Lustig, 'James, Arnold', 190.

<sup>103</sup> Lustig, 'James, Arnold', 182.

<sup>104</sup> Both versions of the essay were first published in New York, and each begin by alluding to Coquelin's visit to America ('Coquelin' (1887): 321; 'Coquelin' (1915): 532), and end either with an appeal to the public of the 'United States' ('Coquelin' (1887): 333) or a description of the 'test' exerted by 'our American conditions' upon the actor ('Coquelin' (1915): 545).

(‘Coquelin’ (1887): 329), unified simply perhaps by being ‘not French’.<sup>105</sup> This cultural conflation is perhaps surprising for a writer so sensitive to the differences between American and English culture, as suggested by the enumerated list of the qualities of ‘high civilization’ in *Hawthorne* (1879) (*LC1*: 351). It might also indicate a difference between James and Arnold’s conception of ‘civilization’, since for the latter, America lacked ‘culture’ but possessed a very advanced ‘civilization’, ‘objectively and synchronically manifested in the political, educational, and technological systems and structures of modern life’.<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless, as Lustig points out, ‘[i]t would be misleading to suggest that James and Arnold took opposite positions on “civilization”, with one using it as a synonym and the other as an antonym of “culture”’; they were both, in their distinctive but mutually informing ways, considering the relation between civilisation as process and as an accomplished fact.<sup>107</sup> The potentially reactionary quality of the ‘tone of civilization’ is thus avoided so long as it evinces ‘an intellectual suppleness which seems absent from the bifurcated notion of culture we find even in the work of such undoubtedly great critics as Edward Said (“culture and imperialism”) or Fredric Jameson (the “cultural logic of late capitalism”)’.<sup>108</sup> The ‘tone of civilization’ that is to say, possesses just as much flexibility as the compositely Anglo-Saxon audience it resists.

Far from a totalising or monolithic ideal, the ‘tone of civilization’ leaves scope for mixture and interfusion, which is even intimated in the catalogue of cultural absences in *Hawthorne*; ‘the American knows that a good deal remains’ (*LC2*: 352). In his earlier letter to Thomas Sergeant Perry (20 September 1867), James describes how ‘to be an American is an excellent preparation for culture’ insofar as ‘we can deal freely with forms of civilization not our own, can pick and choose and

---

<sup>105</sup> James even presents this public as indiscriminately Anglo-American in the performance of Thouvenin in the last act of Alexandre Dumas’s ( *fils*) *Denise* (1885), which James supposes to be ‘the longest speech in the French drama’: ‘[a]n English or American audience would have sunk into a settled gloom by the time the long rhythm of the thing had declared’ (‘Coquelin’ (1887): 328).

<sup>106</sup> Lustig, ‘James, Arnold’, 175.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 192-93.



assimilate and in short (aesthetically etc.) claim our property wherever we find it' (*HJL* I: 77).<sup>109</sup> The following chapter will show how this intelligence depends in part upon the recognition, rather than suppression, of cultural difference. James's 'Preface' to the volume of the *New York Edition* containing *Lady Barbarina* also aspires to an active and processual mode of 'intelligence' which would appreciate 'the mixture of manners':

Nothing appeals to me more, I confess, as a "critic of life" in any sense worthy of the name, than the finer – if indeed the less easily formulated – group of the conquests of civilization, the multiplied symptoms among educated people, from wherever drawn, of a common intelligence and a social fusion tending to abridge old rigours of separation. (*LC2*: 1211-12)<sup>110</sup>

This recalls Ralph Waldo Emerson's observation of the 'pleasing' and 'highly intellectual cast' of Rachel's 'manners and carriage' in her performance in *Phèdre* in May 1848: 'the heaps of flowers that were flung at her' caused her to 'smile' with a 'perfect good nature & a kind of universal intelligence'.<sup>111</sup> Emerson's remark (if not the example of Rachel herself) also anticipates the effect of Miriam's tone, either when, at the 'great night' that 'marked an era in contemporary art', the 'great childish audience, gaping at her points, expanded there before her like a lap to catch flowers' (*TM* II: 870), or when Peter observes the way that '[p]eople snatched their eyes from the stage for an instant, to look at each other, and a sense of intelligence deepened and spread' (*TM* II: 755). 'Unifying narrative and political bodies', Sarah

---

<sup>109</sup> The letter continues: 'American writers may yet indicate that a vast intellectual fusion and synthesis of the various National tendencies of the world is the condition of more important achievements than any we have ever yet seen' (*HJL* I: 77). A similar sentiment occurs in 'Animated Conversation': '[a]nd aren't we, in this room, such a mixture that we scarcely, ourselves, know who is who and what is what? [. . .] I rejoice in the confusion, for it makes for civilization' (*LC1*: 71), as noted by Lustig, 'James, Arnold', 194.

<sup>110</sup> Lustig notes the Arnoldian resonances of the phrase, a "'critic of life'", 'James, Arnold', 183 n.93.

<sup>111</sup> *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. by Merton M. Sealts, 16 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), X, p. 269. See also Blair, p. 234 n.19.

Blair suggests, ‘Miriam produces in her audience “a fine universal consensus” [*TM* II: 755] of response that inaugurates a powerful experience of mutual affirmation’ enlivened by this ‘higher form of contagious feeling’.<sup>112</sup> Even at this late stage, Miriam’s success is still just a possibility, appearing all the greater because of the eyes and ears of Peter through which she is seen and heard. We would do well to believe in it.

---

<sup>112</sup> Blair, p. 139.

‘The Drama of Discrimination’

## 2.0 The Play of Discrimination

In a letter to Lizzie Boot on October 30 1878, James described Tennyson’s intonation: ‘[h]e read out ‘Locksley Hall’ to me, in a kind of solemn, sonorous chant, and I thought the performance, and the occasion, sufficiently impressive’ (*HJL* II: 190). ‘Sufficiently’, however, hints at room for improvement, and in his subsequent letter to Charles Eliot Norton on November 17 that year, James recalls that the laureate ‘read aloud – not very well – “Locksley Hall”’ in a ‘manner that is rather bad than good’ (*HJL* II: 196). Both accounts are incorporated into a more extended passage in *The Middle Years* (1917):

It was all interesting, it was at least all odd; but why in the name of poetic justice had one anciently heaved and flushed with one’s own recital of the splendid stuff if one was now only to sigh in secret “Oh dear, oh dear”? The author lowered the whole pitch, that of expression, that of interpretation above all; I heard him, in cool surprise, take even more out of his verse than he had put in, and so bring me back to the point I had immediately and privately made, the point that he wasn’t Tennysonian. I felt him as he went on and lose that character beyond repair, and no effect of the organ-roll, of monotonous majesty, no suggestion of the long echo, availed at all to save it. What the case came to for me, I take it – and by the case I mean the intellectual, the artistic – was that it lacked the intelligence, the play of discrimination, I should have taken for granted in it, and thereby, brooding monster that I was, born to discriminate *à tout propos*, lacked the interest. (*NSBMY*: 465-66)

Euphony alone is insufficient; ‘no effect of the organ-roll, of monotonous majesty, no suggestion of the long echo, availed at all to save it’ (*NSBMY*: 466). ‘With all the resonance of the chant, the whole thing was yet *still*, with all the long swing of its

motion it yet remained where it was' (*NSBMY*: 466).<sup>1</sup> 'Yet *still*' combines both senses of movement and motion, since '*still*' can mean 'yet' or 'continually' as well as unmoving (*OED* a.7).<sup>2</sup> James was not alone in responding to Tennyson's tone in this way. When H. D. Rawnsley heard 'Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington' read by its author in 1884, he could hear 'a far away cathedral organ in his voice' as he 'rolled out and lengthened the open "o's" in the words' and 'lengthened out the vowel *a* in the words "great" and "lamentation" till the words seemed as if they had been spelt "greaat" and "lamentaation"'.<sup>3</sup> James's charge that Tennyson lacks 'discrimination', which is also a lack of 'intelligence', concentrates these observations concerning grandiloquence and its excesses. Tennyson's 'monotonous majesty' flattens out the contrastive emphases of his verse, taking more out of it than might have ever been put into it, 'lower[ing] the whole pitch, that of expression, that

---

<sup>1</sup> For Griffiths, this 'stillness' is a condition of print's 'mute polyphony': 'stillness is the perpetual immobility of print which James acutely managed to hear even when Tennyson was reading aloud at him', *Printed*, p. 122.

<sup>2</sup> James may have heard this stillness in 'Locksley Hall' itself: '[k]nowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and he bears a laden breast, / Full of sad experience, moving toward the stillness of his rest' (ll.143-4), in *Selected Poems*, pp. 181-192 (p. 190). Collister observes that James's evocation of the 'dreary, dreary moorland or the long dun wolds' recalls the opening scene of 'Locksley Hall': '[d]reary gleams about the moorland flying over Locksley Hall' (ll.4), in *ibid.*, p. 183, cited in *NSBMY*, p. 465 n.90. In 1875, James described how Tennyson's verse fell short of its 'dramatic intention' as a result of this perpetual motionlessness: the verse is 'poised and stationary, like a bird whose wings have borne him high, but the beauty of whose movement is less in great ethereal sweeps and circles than in the way he hangs motionless in the blue air', which thus 'defeats the dramatic intention', 'Mr Tennyson's Drama' [review of *Queen Mary* (1875)], in *CWAD2*, pp. 79-104 (p. 84).

<sup>3</sup> Tennyson also 'rolled out and lengthened the open "o's" in the words "[t]o the nooise of the moourning of a mighty naation"', H.D. Rawnsley, *Memories of the Tennysons* (Glasgow: J. MacLehose and Sons, 1900), p. 99. For other accounts such as this, see Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, *Victorian Afterlives: The Shaping of Influence in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 268.

of interpretation above all' (*NSBMY*: 465).<sup>4</sup> Consequently, in one of the many discriminations James makes himself at the level of argument,<sup>5</sup> Tennyson is distinct from the Tennysonian, a discovery which, in an important phrase for James, was 'like a rap on the knuckles of a sweet superstition' (*NSBMY*: 457).<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, this lack of discrimination not only distinguishes Tennyson from the Tennysonian, but Tennyson from Browning. The latter *did* in fact read 'with all the exhibition of point and authority, the expressive particularisation, so to speak, that I had missed on the part of the Laureate' (*NSBMY*: 466). However, if Tennyson's intonation privileged poeticism over 'point', 'the author of Men and Women' was at fault for the reverse: because '[h]e particularised if ever a man did', he 'had to *prove* himself a poet' (*NSBMY*: 466-67).<sup>7</sup> As James recalls elsewhere, Browning read his poems 'as if he

---

<sup>4</sup> Tennyson earlier surprises James by outlining the 'enumeration' of the Marquis's de Sade's numerous 'titles to infamy' (*NSBMY*: 463), and strikes James 'as neither knowing nor communicating knowledge' so that the 'whole air was charged of the want of proportion between the great spaces and reaches and echoes commanded [...] and the quantity and variety of experience supposable' (*NSBMY*: 464). 'So to discriminate' between 'great eminence' and experience (when the question concerns de Sade's 'infamy') means that the 'poetic character' is 'more worn than paid for', which 'was in a manner to put one's hand on the key' (*NSBMY*: 464).

<sup>5</sup> The 'monstrous demonstration that Tennyson was not Tennysonian' (*NSBMY*: 457), recalling the letter to Norton, is in turn distinguished from James's self-deprecation as a 'brooding monster', whilst Browning's 'exhibition of point and authority' is discriminated from the 'point' that James had made to himself ('the point that he wasn't Tennysonian'). That which might successfully lay claim to 'the interest' is in turn differentiated from the merely 'interesting', whilst the 'intellectual' case is distinguished from the 'intelligence' Tennyson's tone lacks.

<sup>6</sup> The metaphor recurs in James as an appeal provoking audible response (*SP*: 49; *AB*: 48). It also occurs in Arthur Schopenhauer's 'The Will in Nature': "[t]ruth lies at the bottom of a well," said Democritus; and the centuries with a sigh, have repeated his words. But small wonder, if it gets a rap on the knuckles as soon as it tries to come out!', *Two Essays by Arthur Schopenhauer*, trans. not given (London: George Bell and Sons, 1889), p. 236. Rosanna Gaw is described by Gray as sitting 'like Truth, at the bottom of a well' (*IT* 202). For James's relation to Schopenhauer, see Joseph Firebaugh, 'A Schopenhauerian Novel: James's *The Princess Casamassima*', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 13.3 (1958), 177-197.

<sup>7</sup> James's letter to Charles Eliot Norton also makes this comparison: '[b]ut whenever I feel disposed to reflect that Tennyson is not personally Tennysonian, I summon up the image of Browning, and this has the effect of making me check my complaints' (*HJL* II: 196).

hated them and would like to bite them to pieces'.<sup>8</sup> The distinction between the two poets, which is itself a distinction between a lack of discrimination and its excess, confirms one of the central fault lines of nineteenth-century poetics,<sup>9</sup> which in James's handling amounts to a distinction between audition and intelligence, sound and thought.<sup>10</sup>

In one sense, this objection to Tennyson's tone endows it with tremendous power: it does not just expose the gulf between ideals (the Tennysonian) and their reality (Tennyson). It also intimates what intonation *might* be able to do were it capable of bringing sound and intelligence together without compromising its drama. Tennyson not only 'lacked the intelligence' but also 'the play of discrimination, I should have taken for granted in it' (*NSBMY*: 466), and 'play' recalls the descriptions of tone as in itself a 'complete' or 'whole drama' described in the previous chapter, as well as Coquelin's 'play of tone' (*CWAD2*: 540). 'Play of discrimination' is a phrase that recurs in different guises throughout James's writings, and belongs to a broader context of criticism and aesthetic judgement. Most notably, it evokes the Arnoldian conception of criticism as the 'free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches', as cited in James's 1864 review of Arnold's *Essays in Criticism* (*LCI*: 715).<sup>11</sup> The dramatic and aesthetic senses of 'play of discrimination' combine when James recalls his 'small encouraged state as a *free playgoer*' when attending a

---

<sup>8</sup> As recorded by Leon Edel, *The Conquest of London, 1870-1883* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1962), p. 376. See also *NSBMY*, p. 466 n.92.

<sup>9</sup> The opposition is famously cited by George Saintsbury's comparative chapter on the two poets, which notes that whilst they are frequently regarded as 'opposites in all respects, and perhaps specially in prosody', 'the fact is quite different, and I hope to show it', *A History of English Prosody: From the Twelfth Century to the Present Day*, 3 vols (London: Macmillan, 1910), III, p. 183.

<sup>10</sup> W.F. Rawnsley recalls: '[t]he *sound* of a line of poetry (for poetry, to be fully understood, should be read aloud) was very much to him [...] In speaking of Browning, he once said to me: "I don't think that poetry should be *all thought*: there should be some melody"', cited by Seamus Perry, *Alfred Tennyson* (Devon: Northcote, 2005), p. 21.

<sup>11</sup> James recalls how his Albany cousins were separated from the 'light of "business"', lacking any 'instinct of the market' (*SBOC*: 155, 156): '[w]e hadn't doubtless at all a complete play of intelligence – if I may not so far discriminate as to say *they* hadn't' (*SBOC*: 155). '[C]omplete play of intelligence' refers to the 'questions of arithmetic' required for the kind of economic success achieved by James's ancestors (such as William James of Albany).

performance of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (SBOC: 132, emphasis added). A 'great initiation' arose from 'his first glimpse of that possibility of a "free play of mind" over a subject which was to throw him with force at a later stage of culture, when subjects had considerably multiplied, into the critical arms of Matthew Arnold' (SBOC: 132). James's "'free play'" here arises from the ability to 'enjoy [the performance] with ironic detachment' despite the shortcomings of the production and the 'crude scenic appeal' of its stage apparatus (SBOC: 133). For Arnold, the free play of the mind is only truly free if it is unconstrained by ideological bias and aloof from what is called "'the practical view of things'".<sup>12</sup> To discriminate freely and without interest is thus to perceive both sides of the argument, avoiding lapsing into instrumental passivity or a commitment to false praxis.<sup>13</sup> For Arnold it is the practical rather than the poetical person who is 'not apt for fine discriminations', 'yet in these distinctions truth and the highest culture greatly find their account'.<sup>14</sup>

This disposition to 'play with contradictory possibilities' was a central part of aestheticism's influence upon James, Jonathan Freedman notes.<sup>15</sup> As a quality of aesthetic responsiveness, the idea goes at least as far back as Kant's aesthetics, for whom for the harmonious free play of imagination and understanding involved in judgements of beauty lead to a very special power of discrimination.<sup>16</sup> For Kant, such judgements are unavoidably subjective, but nevertheless make an appeal to universal assent, and something of this quality inheres in the scene from *A Small Boy and Others*, as David Kurnick notes: because 'it seems hardly necessary to see the

---

<sup>12</sup> Matthew Arnold, 'The Function of Criticism', in *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 37.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Freedman, *Professions*, p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> Without harmony, a judgement of beauty would not be pleasurable; without free play, such a judgement would become cognitive, and hence not properly disinterested. Because judgements of beauty involve imagination and understanding necessary for cognition in general, the power of discrimination promotes a 'feeling of life', adrenalising and 'quickenings' the 'cognitive powers' responsible for aesthetic judgements. However, because such discriminations are not *themselves* cognitive, to make them is to enter into a self-maintaining state in which we seek to '*linger*' in the harmonious free play between imagination and understanding. Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, trans. by Werner Pluhar (Indianapolis and Cambridge: 1987), pp. 44, 68.

spectacle' the emphasis falls instead upon a 'pleasurably embodied collectivity' rather than any interest in the play itself.<sup>17</sup> The 'point exactly was that we attended this spectacle just in order *not* to be beguiled' (*SBOC*: 133), and this 'point' contributed to the 'thrill of an æsthetic adventure' (*SBOC*: 134). To discriminate is not always to decide, and James is far less interested in choosing between competing options than the expressive resources such possibilities might afford.

Of course, the foundational role played by the discrimination of tone in these autobiographical writings, both in the sense of the ability to perceive differences in sound, and the ability for tone to enforce such discriminations itself, must be accompanied with a necessary caveat: autobiographical writing will never capture a pure childhood state of consciousness, but will be shaped and indeed constituted by the act of recollection. Yet whether or not discrimination avows a complete fidelity to actual experience, it remains significant that James was so frequently compelled to identify the play of discrimination within some of his earliest scenes of auditive awakening. For Herford, the 'conditions of commemorative retrospect' are particularly suited to this 'play of affiliation and discrimination'; in the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* performance, James was determined 'not to denounce' the 'simple faith of an age beguiled by arts so rude' (*SBOC*: 162), whilst at the same time recognising how 'easy it would be to do so'.<sup>18</sup> 'Play' is here used in the sense of the alternation between contrary states, *between* discrimination and affiliation. Equally operable however is the play of discrimination itself – the at once dramatic and intellectual ability to inhabit difference free from the weight of decision and the burden of bias. James's response to Tennyson's tone emerges out of this broader context of discrimination as a kind of judgement, locating the familiar disavowal of the

---

<sup>17</sup> David Kurnick, "'Horrible Impossible": Henry James's Awkward Stage', *HJR*, 26.2 (2005), 109-29 (115).

<sup>18</sup> Herford, *Retrospect*, pp. 50, 51. James elsewhere recalls his 'earliest stir of literary discernment', 'that incipient discrimination which is the soul of criticism', which had 'attached itself to the intelligent consciousness that Grace Greenwood must be somehow finely differentiated from Fanny Fern' (*WWS*: 262-3). I am grateful for Oliver Herford's paper on 'James and the Sound of Difference' delivered in Trieste, July 2019, for drawing my attention to this passage.



confinements of choice within the history of critical theory at the level of tone as well as aesthetic response.

Particularly in the case of a child so precociously ‘born to discriminate’, the ‘play of discrimination’, whether as a quality of the voice or the ear, might also entail a degree of pleasure or ‘fun’.<sup>19</sup> After invoking the ‘critical arms of Matthew Arnold’, James describes how he was ‘at least interested in seeing the matter’, and wonders

among his companions, where the absurd, the absurd for *them*, ended and the fun, the real fun, which was the gravity, the tragedy, the drollery, the beauty, the thing itself, briefly, might be legitimately and tastefully held to begin.  
(*SBOC*: 133)

‘The thing itself’ carries Arnoldian undertones of the function of criticism.<sup>20</sup> Yet even in the case of a writer such as James for whom discrimination was purportedly second nature, the irony operable within his self-characterisation as a ‘brooding monster’ does not entirely alleviate the sense that his unusually advanced predilection is a burden not wholly to be wished. Only Shakespeare, ‘monster of precocity’, convincingly reconciles such extremes.<sup>21</sup> Discrimination, in the sense of a struggle to make out the differences between proximate sounds, can be a nightmare as well as a pleasure, or some combination of the two, as when James visited to the Galerie d’Apollon in the Louvre aged thirteen and recalls the ‘most appalling and yet most admirable nightmare of my life’ (*SBOC*: 277).

It was as if they had gathered there into a vast deafening chorus; I shall never forget how – speaking, that is, for my own sense – they filled those vast halls

---

<sup>19</sup> This is not altogether unlike the ‘fun’ attendant upon the placement of the ‘shade of a cadence or the position of a comma’ described in *The Golden Bowl* ‘Preface’ (*LC2*: 1338).

<sup>20</sup> As James summarises, Arnold seeks ‘to see things in themselves as they are, – to be disinterested’ (*LC2*: 715). Despite avowing disinterested free play, James is ‘at least interested’ too, departing from the Arnoldian sense of ‘interest’ as party-political bias and moving towards a sense of interest as curiosity and engagement: ‘I am not sure I wasn’t thus more interested in the pulse of our party, under my tiny recording thumb, than in the beat of the drama and the shock of its opposed forces’ (*SBOC*: 133).

<sup>21</sup> ‘Introduction’ to *The Tempest*, in *CWAD2*, pp. 491-510 (p. 495).

with the influence rather of some complicated sound, diffused and reverberant, than of such visibilities as one could directly deal with. To distinguish among these, in the charged and coloured and confounding air, was difficult – it discouraged and defied; which was doubtless why my impression originally best entertained was that of those magnificent parts of the great gallery simply not inviting us to distinguish. They only arched over us in the wonder of their endless golden riot and relief, figured and flourished in perpetual revolution, breaking into great high-hung circles and symmetries of squandered picture, opening into deep outward embrasures that threw off the rest of monumental Paris somehow as a told story, a sort of wrought effect or bold ambiguity for a vista, and yet held it there, at every point, as a vast bright gage, even at moments a felt adventure, of experience. (*SBOC*: 274-75)

‘[N]ot yet aware of style, though on the way to become so’,<sup>22</sup> James describes how the Louvre’s exhibited paintings ‘simply overwhelmed and bewildered me’ (*SBOC*: 274). Paintings not only become indistinguishable from sound here, but sound becomes difficult to distinguish in itself. The ‘complicated sound’ is exaggerated by the densely alliterative texture of the prose, multiplying connections between like-sounds as well as making it hard to tell between them: ‘coloured and confounding air’, ‘diffused [...] was difficult – it discouraged and defied’, ‘great gallery’, ‘riot and relief, figured and flourished’, ‘high-hung circles’, ‘symmetries of squandered picture’. James’s response captures the at once appalling and appealing audition the passage itself induces, and his ‘appalled state’ (*SBOC*: 277) provoked by the gallery sounds within the name of the gallery itself, as though it were both a scene of James’s youth and constitutive of it: ‘the Galerie d’Apollon of my childhood’ (*SBOC*: 277).

As this chapter will show, James believed in the power of discrimination as a powerful though ambivalent mode of cultural advancement. What follows falls into five parts. The first argues that, for James, discrimination is essential for the formulation of a culture founded upon the mutually informing, but complex and

---

<sup>22</sup> This echoes Spencer Brydon’s recollection, in ‘The Jolly Corner’, of the marble floor of the hall in his family home ‘as the admiration of his childhood and that had then made in him, as he now saw, the growth of an early conception of style’ (*JCOT*: 216).

often paradoxical, ideals of cosmopolitanism and femininity, one receptive to cultural difference through the differences of the voice itself. The second section argues that such acknowledgement of social difference relies on the preservation of the past which will support it, one which draws distinctions between French and Anglo-American models of speech. The third section develops these edifying discriminations of tone with reference to *The Awkward Age*, where it is especially unclear whether discrimination is a pleasure or a nightmare, whether it refines or corrupts. The final two sections consider the phrase the ‘drama of discrimination’ in the context of the interpretative and transatlantic conflicts in *The Ambassadors*. Strether’s encounters challenge as well as facilitate a powerful kind of aesthetic education, consolidating the fullness of Strether’s experience, even and perhaps especially when it is not clear whether anything has been learnt at all.

## 2.1 ‘The Acquisition of a New Ear’

Just as the discriminatory role of a ‘free playgoer’ involved a pleasurable embodied collectivity, James’s essays on American culture advocate the ‘practice of critical discrimination in the aesthetic realm’ which ‘fosters similar habits of negotiated and ongoing discrimination in the social realm’, in Beverly Haviland’s words.<sup>23</sup> These edifying aesthetic and social habits depend upon intonation: ‘[y]ou don’t speak soundly and agreeably’, James declares in ‘The Question of Our Speech’, ‘unless you have discriminated, unless you have noticed differences and suffered from violations and vulgarities’ (*QS*: 15), where speaking ‘soundly’ implies a quality of integrity as well as audition.

To discriminate, to learn to find our way among noted sounds, find it as through the acquisition of a new ear; to begin to prefer form to the absence of form, to distinguish colour from the absence of colour – all this amounts to substituting manner for the absence of manner: whereby it is *manners themselves*, or something like a sketchy approach to a dim gregarious

---

<sup>23</sup> Beverly Haviland, *Henry James’s Last Romance: Making Sense of the Past in the American Scene* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 100.

conception of them, that we shall (delicious thought!) begin to work round to the notion of. (QS: 36-37)

Because intonation is an art and not just a linguistic science, the shades, gradations, and transitions of tone should be attended to with nothing less than the care with which we might ‘distinguish colour from the absence of colour’, or the ‘radiant effect of white upon white, of similar but discriminated tones’ in John Singer Sargent’s *Fumée d’Ambre Gris*, as James writes in 1887 essay on the painter.<sup>24</sup> Elsewhere in ‘The Question of Our Speech’, James objects to the ‘absolutely inexpert daub of unapplied tone’ (QS: 25), ‘unapplied’ combining both senses of an absence of painterly finish and dedication or commitment.<sup>25</sup> In *The American Scene*, ‘the American people’ are said to ‘abhor, whenever it may be, a discrimination’, or make them ‘as lightly and scantily as possible’ (AS: 305), and ‘[g]radations, transitions, differences of any sort, temporal, material, social, whether in man or in his environment’ thus ‘shrank somehow, under its sweep, to negligible items’ (AS: 305-36).

This ‘sketchy approach’ to a conception of ‘manners themselves’ required for the acquisition of this new, discriminatory, ear, is evident as early as *The Europeans*:

---

<sup>24</sup> ‘John S. Sargent’, in *CWADI*, pp. 415-32 (p. 422).

<sup>25</sup> For Coquelin, ‘the application of an art is style’ (Coquelin (1915): 533).

*A Sketch* (1878).<sup>26</sup> Mr Wentworth describes the effect of the arrival of Eugenia and Felix to the rural environs of Boston as an “‘expos[ure] to peculiar influences. I don’t say they are bad; I don’t judge them in advance [...] It will be a different tone’” (*E I*: 137-38). Mr Wentworth, however, is unable to ‘accommodate’ himself to the novelty of Eugenia’s tone at all, even to dislike it:

He was paralysed and bewildered by her foreignness. She spoke, somehow, a different language. There was something strange in her words. He had a feeling that another man, in his place, would accommodate himself to her tone. (*E I*: 176)

The unknowable aspect of Eugenia’s new tone is particularly evident when she praises Gertrude’s appearance and we are told that ‘[i]t was not the compliment that pleased her [Gertrude]; she did not believe it’ (*E I*: 102). Gertrude ‘could hardly have told you the source of her satisfaction; it came from something in the way the Baroness spoke, and it was diminished – it was rather deepened, oddly enough – by the young girl’s disbelief’ (*E I*: 102). Because the paraphraseable content of the Baroness’s praise is unimportant to Gertrude, the tone to which she is exposed and in which she takes such pleasure is especially foregrounded.

---

<sup>26</sup> Tony Tanner suggests that ‘[s]ketch’ suggests the mannered expressivity of the French stage, arguing that the novel ‘probably owes much in structure and tone [...] to the French playwrights Dumas  *fils*, Augier and Sardou’, ‘Introduction’ to *The Europeans: A Sketch* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), pp. 7-29 (p. 15). Tanner draws our attention to ‘The Picture Season in London’ (1877), where James writes how, unlike in England, the Americans sketch very little, in *CWADI*, pp. 243-267 (pp. 248-49). Susan M. Griffin speculates that in writing *The Europeans*, James’s ambition was ‘to fill the gap in American culture’, ‘Introduction’ to *The Europeans*, ed. by Susan M. Griffin, in *CFHJ*, IV (2015), pp. xxviii-lv (p. xl). In ‘Americans Abroad’ (1878) this state of lapsed discrimination is depicted an ‘imperfect reciprocity’ between Americans and Europeans: the former’s merits are ‘not the sort that strike the eye – still less the ear’ (*CTWI*: 787, 790). The short story “‘Europe’” (1899), depicting three sisters who wish to go to the eponymous continent, and whose mother wishes to expose them to the edifying refinements of Europe, begins with a comparable reflection on the manners of an American past associated with the suburbs of Boston: ‘[i]t was another world, with other manners, a *different tone*, a different taste’ (*SS*: 36 emphasis added). Here, however, the ‘different tone’ is located in the past rather than Europe.

Many readers of *The Europeans* understand Eugenia's manner as a mode of self-alienation, proof of continental custom constraining rather than facilitating individual freedom,<sup>27</sup> as though the novel depicted a kind of tragedy of manners.<sup>28</sup> For R.P. Blackmur, the story depicts a 'brother and sister who come to America in the hope of making their fortunes by the expense of art and manners' but 'the sister finds herself becoming all manners without force behind them'.<sup>29</sup> It is easy to see why Eugenia's manner arouses such suspicion: Gertrude's incredulity deepens rather than diminishes her satisfaction, so that the pleasure gained from Eugenia's tone exists in inverse proportion to belief. For other members of the New England circle her sophistication resembles a kind of fraudulence. This proximity of manner to mendacity is further evident when Mrs Acton says that she has "'heard a great deal about'" Eugenia, to which the Baroness replies:

"From your son, eh?" Eugenia asked. "He has talked to me immensely of you. Oh, he talks of you as you would like", the Baroness declared; "as such a son *must* talk of such a mother!"

Mrs Acton sat gazing; this was part of Madame Münster's "manner".  
(*E* I: 252)

This kind of exaggerated emphasis ("'*must*'") is consistent with Eugenia's flamboyance of stress, which is itself compared to her speech: 'a kind of conversation mountebank, attired, intellectually, in gauze and spangles' (*E* I: 118). Eugenia's declaration also embodies her "'manner'" for the more straightforward reason that it is a lie: '[t]he Baroness turned her smile toward [Robert], and she instantly felt that she had been observed to be fibbing', only to wonder 'who were

---

<sup>27</sup> Richard Tuttleton also cites Poirier to confirm Eugenia's exclusion as proof of a 'society that cannot assimilate her', 'Propriety and Fine Perception: James's "The Europeans"', *The Modern Language Review*, 73 (1978), 481-95 (488); Richard Poirier, *The Comic Sense of Henry James: A Study of the Early Novels* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1960), p. 123.

<sup>28</sup> The phrase derives from Frederick Crews, *The Tragedy of Manners: Moral Drama in the Later Novels of Henry James* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957).

<sup>29</sup> R.P. Blackmur, 'Washington Square and The Europeans', *Studies in Henry James*, pp. 185-92 (p. 191).

these people to whom such fibbing was not pleasing?’ (*E* I: 253) ‘Lie’, however is perhaps not the right word for this ‘fib’; because Eugenia’s conception of civility depends upon non-mendacious forms of untruthfulness. The Baroness’s parting words to Gertrude demonstrate this conception of artifice as a mode of sincerity. Eugenia asks: “[y]ou will love me a little, won’t you? I think I may say I gain on being known” (*E* II. 254-55). Eugenia then ‘terminat[es] these observations with the softest cadence of her voice’, and ‘imprinted a sort of grand official kiss upon Gertrude’s forehead’ (*E* II: 255). ‘Increased familiarity’ in no way diminishes her ‘mysterious impressiveness’, as demonstrated by the ‘little ceremony’ of her kiss and cadence (*E* II: 235).

Insofar as the protagonists of *The Europeans* ‘are wholly defined by their tones of voice, by their conduct in dialogue and in social relations’, as Richard Poirier argues,<sup>30</sup> Eugenia’s ‘manner’ might suggest a desire to ‘protect’ her ‘inner freedom’ as opposed to a fraudulent extravagance.<sup>31</sup> ‘Once or twice in a lifetime’, Emerson writes in ‘Manners’, the essay Robert Acton’s mother is reading just before observing Madame Münster’s “manner” (*E* I: 252), ‘we are permitted to enjoy the charm of noble manners, in the presence of a man or woman who have no bar in their nature, but whose character emanates freely in their word and gesture’.<sup>32</sup> There can thus be spontaneous as well as contrived artifice, as in those individuals recalled by Emerson whose manners are ‘original and commanding’ and which ‘held out protection and prosperity’.<sup>33</sup>

Any sense that the cultivated discriminations of Eugenia might represent a kind of fraudulence is further complicated by the way that even the most supposedly ‘natural’ intonation free from all possible artifice is shown to be potentially less sincere than the most artful discriminations of tone. When Mr Brand confesses his

---

<sup>30</sup> Richard Poirier, *A World Elsewhere: The Place of Style in American Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 104-5.

<sup>31</sup> Poirier, *Comic*, pp. 115-16.

<sup>32</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, ‘Manners’, in *Essays and Poems* (New York: Library of America, 1983; 1996), pp. 513-32 (pp. 528-29).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 529.

love to Gertrude, he does so in what she hears as a flatness of tone devoid of any discrimination whatsoever:

“I love you, Gertrude,” he said. “I love you very much; I love you more than ever.”

He said these words just as she had known he would; she had heard them before. They had no charm for her; she had said to herself before that it was very strange. It was supposed to be delightful for a woman to listen to such words; but these seemed to her flat and mechanical. (*E* I: 209-10)

If “I love you” is amongst the most clichéd of all phrases, it thereby depends upon the intonation with which it is read. The semantic vacuity means that the paralinguistic elements of expression have to work all the harder, as Roland Barthes notes: ‘like the Argonaut renewing his ship during its voyage without changing its name’, the meaning of “I love you” must be constantly restated, as the job of both love and language is ‘to give to one and the same phrase inflections which will be forever new’.<sup>34</sup> *The Europeans* explores this faculty of *responsiveness* to social difference represented by Eugenia’s ‘new tone’, as well implying, through Brand’s tone, that a lack of discrimination within the voice exposes the limitations of unaccommodating inflexibility, as though the words themselves could be sufficient.

Yet a lack of discrimination can on occasion be as eloquent as its excess. When Rosamond and Lydgate discuss the consequences of his incurred debt in *Middlemarch* (1872), her indifference is conveyed by a tone containing as little discrimination as possible, but which is also for this reason expressive:

“What can *I* do, Tertius?” said Rosamond, turning her eyes on him again. That little speech of four words, like so many others in all languages, is capable by varied vocal inflexions of expressing all states of mind from helpless dimness to exhaustive argumentative perception, from the completest self-devoting fellowship to the most neutral aloofness. Rosamond’s thin utterance threw into the words: “What can *I* do!” as much neutrality as they could hold. They fell

---

<sup>34</sup> Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, trans. by Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. 114.



like a mortal chill on Lydgate's roused tenderness. He did not storm in indignation – he felt too sad a sinking of the heart. And when he spoke again it was more in the tone of a man who forces himself to fulfil a task.<sup>35</sup>

Although James's praise of *Middlemarch* in 1873 was equivocal,<sup>36</sup> these 'painful fireside scenes between Lydgate and his miserable little wife' were for him the 'most perfectly successful passages in the book': the 'author's rare psychological penetration is lavished upon this veritably mulish domestic flower. There is nothing more powerfully real than these scenes in all English fiction, and nothing certainly more *intelligent*' (*LCI*: 963). Rosamond's 'gracefully vicious' character (*LCI*: 963) is here evoked by her deprivations of tone which become cruelly eloquent, articulating the potential richness of expression by abandoning it. The flatness of tone is here a calibrated imprecision, discriminately indiscriminate and therefore powerfully expressive. The 'flatness' of the printed page, in Griffiths's account, is similarly meaningful *because* it withholds discriminations of emphasis. Daisy Miller's 'soft, flat monotone' (*DMI* I: 61) might therefore represent a defence or probe as much as the social deafness of an American abroad to the variegated inflexions of European civility.<sup>37</sup> But what distinguishes this kind of flatness from the forms of monotony in American culture is that it either allows for the possibility of discrimination or conveys an awareness of the discriminations it refuses. The kind of culturally undermining 'facile flatness' James resists, to adapt his condemnation of contemporary fiction in 1899 (*LCI*: 110), is entirely ignorant of the possibilities of discrimination, and thus represents a failure of intelligence rather than a choice.

Flatness is comparably articulate in *An International Episode* (1879). Two English aristocrats travel to America and find themselves bewildered by the manners of American women. Mrs Westgate outlines the requirement for cultural discrimination: "when one goes to a foreign country, one ought to enjoy the

---

<sup>35</sup> George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ed. by Rosemary Ashton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965; repr. 2003), p. 594.

<sup>36</sup> '[A]t once one of the strongest and one of the weakest of English novels' (*LCI*: 959).

<sup>37</sup> I am grateful to Adrian Poole for this point.

differences. Of course there are differences; otherwise what did one come abroad for? Look for your pleasure in the differences, Lord Lambeth” (*DM2 I*: 266). The differences are again evident in the manner of her speech:

Mrs Westgate’s discourse was delivered with a mild merciless monotony, a paucity of intonation, an impartial flatness that suggested a flowery mead scrupulously “done over” by a steam roller than had reduced its texture to that of a drawing-room carpet. Lord Lambeth listened to her with, it must be confessed, a rather ineffectual attention, though he summoned to his aid such a show as he might of discriminating motions and murmurs. (*NYE XIV*: 305)

Here it is Lord Lambeth’s ‘discriminating motions and murmurs’ that compensate for his inefficacious attention, rather than the preened neutrality of Mrs Westgate’s tone of ‘mild merciless monotony’.<sup>38</sup> ‘Discriminating motions and murmurs’ here convey Lord Lambeth’s attempt to meaningfully respond to her cultivated flatness, but he persistently misses the mark, a point confirmed by his subsequent admission to having no great intention “‘to study American manners”” (*DM2 I*: 269). These ‘discriminations’ thus prevent the possibility of heeding to Mrs Westgate’s advice to “‘look for your pleasure in the differences”” between their two cultures. Such a recommendation might either suggest that the observation of difference might be a pleasurable activity, or that he try and find his pleasure in the cultural differences themselves. The eloquence of Mrs Westgate’s flatness depends upon leaving both possibilities implied without being asserted. Lord Lambert will ultimately fail to perceive either senses, mistaking the candour of Bessie Alden for sincerity (his love is never taken seriously).

Whilst the ‘acquisition of a new ear’ may be guilty of a certain kind of ‘hierarchical Anglo-Saxonism’, much of James’s antagonistic relation to social democracy derives from a belief that the encounter with cultural difference or a ‘new

---

<sup>38</sup> This is revised from a ‘soft, sweet voice’ (*DM2 I*: 266). This change places renewed emphasis on Mrs Westgate’s impartial inscrutability, rendering Lord Lambeth as less culpably helpless.

tone' makes for 'a rich social life and a mature culture', as Jessica Berman notes: 'distinctions are crucial to the recognition of difference'.<sup>39</sup> The American nation 'must be supple enough to accommodate, preserve, and formalize the various voices it contains', and 'it is in the hands, or more aptly, the mouths of American women that resistance to a distinctionless, mongrelized America lies.'<sup>40</sup> For Carol Levander, whilst we might object to the implication that 'American English is threatened by the tonal deterioration of its female population as they claim political equality with men', at the same time the 'disregard for, even aversion to, their vocal tone is, according to James, a prerequisite of feminist politics'.<sup>41</sup> For Jessica Berman, 'most importantly, it is woman's duty to establish an American speech with a variety of forms and tones, thus re-creating the nation as a multivalent, multifaceted culture'.<sup>42</sup> In *The American Scene*, this 'feminine attitude' is described as a tone as well as the means of its preservation:

It is like some diffused, some slightly confounding, sweetness of voice, charm of tone and accent [...] There was a voice in the air, from week to week, a spiritual voice: "Oh the *land's* all right!" – it took on fairly a fondness of emphasis, it rebounded from other aspects, at times, with such a tenderness. Thus it sounded, the blessed note, under many promptings, but always in the same form and to the effect that the poor dear land itself – if that was all that was the matter – would beautifully "do". It seemed to plead, the pathetic presence, to be liked, to be loved, to be stayed with, lived with, handled with some kindness, shown even some courtesy of admiration. (*AS* 20)

---

<sup>39</sup> Jessica Berman, *Modernist Fiction: Cosmopolitanism and the Politics of Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 62, 70.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>41</sup> Carol Levander, *Voices of the Nation: Women and Public Speech in Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 17, 18.

<sup>42</sup> Berman, p. 62. James was not alone in this regard: his close friend, William Dean Howells, also defended the shaping influence of the tone of American women upon culture's sensitivity to the 'delicate *nuances* of accent'; Americans 'can console [them]selves' that the 'tone-twisting Londoner' is not an element they have to deal with, 'Our Daily Speech', *Harper's Bazaar*, 40 (1906), 930-34 (930, 934).

There is a potential complacency here, as though for all the economic or social problems, the ‘charm of tone’ remind us that the *land* remains unchanging. However, William W. Stowe argues that the accompanying feminine ideals of conciliation and care embody a ‘provisional or heuristic solution to a dilemma of perception rather than a definite, final definition or identification’.<sup>43</sup> The ‘feminine attitude’ thus ‘speaks with the voice of an independent Jamesian heroine rather than a passive *jeune fille*’.<sup>44</sup> Rather than an unreflective self-complacency, this understanding of the feminine ideal of tone as more like an ongoing negotiation rather than a fixed abstraction recognises that James’s ‘acquisition of a new ear’ ‘performatively meditates on American character and culture-building *and on the limits of his own attempts to represent them*’.<sup>45</sup> The representational limits of culture-building are largely reconciled by Berman and Levander in their account of the role of the ‘new ear’ in terms of a feminist politics, and so the discrimination of tone not only enables the recognition of social and sexual difference, but provides ‘a version of national speech that will revise the narrative of a unitary America while also preserving its history’.<sup>46</sup> Insofar as discrimination preserves the past as well as the conditions for sociable companionship, the ‘acquisition of a new ear’ is thus also the return of an *old ear*, a kind of auditive intelligence receptive and responsive to social and national difference through the differences of tone itself.<sup>47</sup>

## 2.2 The Tone-Bearers

For Beverly Haviland, the preservation of the past is achieved through companionable exchange, uniting the twin pedagogical goals of sociability and

---

<sup>43</sup> William W. Stowe, ““Oh, the land’s all right!”: Landscape in James’s American Scene”, *HJR*, 24.1 (2003), 45-56 (53).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>45</sup> Blair, p. 162. Emphasis added.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>47</sup> This responds to Alex Zwerdling’s suspicion of James’s ‘nostalgia for an unrecoverable past’ on the one hand, and a ‘fear of the [American] present’ on the other, *Improvised Europeans: American Literary Expatriates and the Siege of London* (New York: Basic Books, 1998), p. 200. Cited Berman, p. 55.

retrospection embodied by James's problematically idealised, but encouragingly autonomous, femininity, thereby reiterating 'how important it is for the future of society to relate the past and present so that they are, as it were, on speaking terms'.<sup>48</sup> This 'new ear' is not only on speaking terms with the past; this return to a 'past with another conception of the considerate, the discreet, and the decorous' is itself conveyed by the tones of speech, as described in 'The Manners of American Women':

Distinctly it had been a past on its guard, so far as might be, against the taking of liberties and the non-observance of forms, and its voice lingered on, precisely, in this frequency of the word "forms", and in another refrain, that of the "want of consideration", to which the ear of my adolescent time appears to have been much attuned. (*HJC*: 91)

'[S]peaking with consideration for the forms and shades of our language' (*QS*: 19-20) as James writes in 'The Question of Our Speech', avoids the 'abrogation of care' invoked in 'The Speech of American Women' (*HJC*: 67), 'consideration' both in the sense of taking a matter into account or 'keeping a subject before the mind' and 'thoughtful kindness' (*OED* 2a; 7). The kind of companionable retrospection provoked by James's return to New York in 1904 occurs in 'Crapy Cornelia' (1909), where White-Mason engages in a process of reminiscence with Cornelia Rasch, in whose company he rekindles 'some old community of gossip', 'even with the consciousness perhaps of overdoing a little, of putting at its maximum, for the present harmony, recovery, recapture (what should he call it?) the pitch and quantity of what the past had held for them' (*CFHJ* XXXII: 336).<sup>49</sup> Cornelia has good reason to wonder about the nature of White-Mason's desired intimacy, asking him, for what is the second time, his intentions:

"Do you want to marry *me*?"

---

<sup>48</sup> Haviland, p. xiii.

<sup>49</sup> The past also has an 'accent' in *The American Scene* (*AS*: 245).

It had this time better success – if the term may be felt in any degree to apply. All his candour, or more of it at least, was in his slow, mild, kind, considering head-shake. “No, Cornelia – not to *marry* you.”  
His discrimination was a wonder. (*CFHJ XXXII*: 343)

Cornelia says that White-Mason must not decide not to marry her until he has told Mrs Worthingham, whom he is expected to marry, that he will not marry her either. This moment is thus a double discrimination (he is not marrying two people), but the nature of the refusal in the first instance comes with its own kind of commitment, as revealed by the ‘wonder’ of White-Mason’s stress: his discrimination (‘*marry*’) reveals a desire for the intimacy of reminiscence over the intimacy of marriage, and these sociable ‘connections’ with the past are far in excess of any possible in the present (*CFHJ XXXII*: 344). White-Mason’s discrimination cares for people at the same time as it cares for the past, or rather cares for people *by* caring for the past, evoking a time when ‘the best manners had been the best kindness’ (*CFHJ XXXII*: 330).

‘The Question of Our Speech’ advocates this heritage upon which tone must both draw and preserve:

By the forms and shades of our language I mean the innumerable differentiated, discriminated units of sound and sense that lend themselves to audible production, to enunciation, to intonation: those innumerable units that have, each, an identity, a quality, an outline, a shape, a clearness, a fineness, a sweetness, a richness, that have, in a word, a value, which it is open to us, as lovers of our admirable English tradition, or as cynical traitors to it, to preserve or to destroy. (*QS*: 20)

These ‘differentiated discriminated units of sound and sense’ not only refer to questions of ‘enunciation’ but also to ‘audible production [...], to intonation’ (*QS*: 20). The neglect of ‘forms and shades of language’ thus represents an entire ‘custom of utterance out of which the principle of taste has dropped’ (*QS*: 29): whilst the ‘great idioms of Europe in general have grown up at home and in the family, the ancestral circle’, our ‘unrescued Andromeda, our medium of utterance’, is ‘disjoined

from all the associations' that might have 'helped to form her manners and her voice' (*QS*: 39).

Whether or not American speakers choose to 'preserve or destroy' these 'discriminated units of sound and sense' depends on whether they are lovers of, or 'traitors' to, 'tradition'. 'Traitors' and 'tradition' share an etymology: one meaning of the Latin *traditio* is the 'action of handing over something or someone to another' (*OED* 'tradition' II 4.a), which is why a '*traditor*' in the early Christian church was someone 'who surrendered sacred books and vessels or betrayed fellow Christians in times of persecution to save his or her own life' (*OED* 'traditor' 2; 'tradition' 4.b). According to one understanding, 'tradition' is a handing-over in the sense of surrender, whilst in another it signifies a handing-down as a means of preservation (*OED* 'tradition' 1.a), the difference thus being between betrayal and loyalty. Whilst James's advocacy for discrimination relies on a reactionary investment in the care cultivated by 'tradition', he is also, as we shall see, alive to tradition's fragility and the ease with which it might become a corrupting force.

One metaphor captures the potential vulnerability of tradition when it is handed on without being given up: the 'torch-bearers, as we may rightly describe them, guardians of the sacred flame' (*QS*: 49):

no danger would be more lamentable than that of the real extinction, in our hands, of so sacred a flame. Flames, however, even the most sacred, do not go on burning of themselves; they require to be kept up; handed on the torch needs to be from one group of patient and competent watchers to another. (*QS*: 14-15)

Just as in 'Coquelin', the public lacking auditive intelligence find themselves in the 'deepest darkness' of the auditorium ('Coquelin' (1915): 539), so too will a culture lacking discrimination risk proceeding 'almost dangerously (perilously, that is, to life and limb), in the dark' (*QS*: 24). The 'danger' of failing to discriminate shades of difference ('shade' itself being a comparative darkness), not only refers to the extinction of the sacred flame, but also to the risks such darkness entails: to 'walk in

the dark, dress in the dark, eat in the dark, is to run the chance of breaking our legs, misarranging our clothes, of besmearing our persons; and speech may figure for us either as the motion, the food, or the clothing of intercourse, as you will' (*QS*: 24). Such, then, are the risks of acting benightedly, or, to use James's word, 'unlightenedly' (*QS*: 24).

Just as tone does nothing on its own, so do flames 'require to be kept up'.<sup>50</sup> 'Kept up' not only in the sense of held aloft to dispel the darkness, but also maintained and sustained. This recalls an earlier description of French actors in 'The Théâtre Français' (1877):

They might pass on the torch as they would behind the scenes; so long as, during my time, they didn't let it drop, I made up my mind to be satisfied. And that one could depend upon their not letting it drop became a part of the customary comfort of Parisian life. It became certain that the "traditions" were not mere catchwords, but a most beneficent reality. (*CWAD2*: 191)

'The Théâtre Français', James says, 'has had the good fortune to be able to allow its traditions to accumulate. They have been preserved, transmitted, respected, cherished' (*CWAD2*: 188). The touchstone enables this kind of good fortune, and the torch metaphor also conveys the care with which the auditive intelligence may be handed on without being given up. In *The Tragic Muse*, James revised his description of the effect of Miriam's 'tones of nature' during her performance as a 'sense of intelligence' that 'deepened and spread' around the auditorium (*TM II*: 755) to '[p]eople snatched their eyes from the stage an instant to look at each other, all

---

<sup>50</sup> The keeping up of the 'sacred' flame also alludes to the practice of maintaining a fire in honour of the ancient Olympics at the altar of Hestia, the goddess of the hearth, to whom offerings were made in a domestic as well as civic context. In his essay on Edmond Rostand, James also describes Paul Hervieu's play, *La Course de Flambeau*, first performed on 17 April 1901 in Paris at the Théâtre du Vaudeville, as a work which vividly expresses the 'idea that the torch of life, in the passage from hand to hand, can *stay* in no grasp, and above all can never move backward, whatever the insistent clutch' (*CWAD2*: 486). This suggests an alternative conception of tradition to the one outlined in this chapter, one presented as an inexorable force rather than something to be preserved and cared for.



eager to hand on the torch passed to them by the actress over the footlights (*NYE* VIII: 323). As James writes in ‘The Question of Our Speech’, the ideal of the torch-bearer represents ‘some decent tradition’, and thus the acquisition of a new ear will also open up ‘the interest of a new world, a whole extension of life’ (*QS*: 49). The ‘discriminated units of sound and sense’ depend upon this kind of accumulated historical and cultural experience, one that ensures an adequate care for discrimination which in Europe has ‘grown up at home and in the family’ (*QS*: 39), an upbringing promoting a reliably sustainable, though fragile and communal, kind of inter-generational transmission or *traditio*.

### 2.3 The Awkward Stage

Ventriloquising, in ‘The Question of Our Speech’, the objection that “[c]onscious, imitative speech” might be construed as a kind of failing (“‘isn’t that more dreadful than anything else?’”) James describes how this kind of self-consciousness really depends upon the ‘stage of development’ at which this ‘phase of awakening occurs’ (*QS*: 50): ‘[i]t’s an awkwardness, in your situation, that your own stage is an early one, and that you have found, round about you – outside of these favouring shades – too little help’ (*QS*: 50-51). The ‘stage’ of awkwardness here consists in the transition not only from ignorance to knowledge but from consciousness to instinctive habit. Through this ‘door’ James’s audience has to pass, a door ‘which is, inevitably, sometimes, rather straight and narrow’ (*QS*: 51).<sup>51</sup> This is something of a tight ‘squeeze’, and the awkwardness of this transition is ‘what we pay for having

---

<sup>51</sup> ‘Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it’ (Matthew 7.14). The ‘epoch-making’ note of his Aunt also made the young James feel as though ‘the door flung open’ (*SBOC*: 152), whilst Coquelin’s performance of *Lions et Renards* ‘opened a door thru [sic] which I was in future to pass as often as possible into a world of delightful, fruitful art’, representing the ‘first step of an initiation’ (‘Coquelin’ (1915): 531). James also defends the ‘far reaching importance of tone’ in ‘The Question of Our Speech’ on the basis that it is ‘the very hinge of the relation between man and man’ (*QS*: 21), a turning point in the sense of a pivot upon which relations might turn, in the way that a door might open, albeit in the specific context of the wider possibility of social change rather than the self-communing sense of the ‘turning point’ discussed in the previous chapter.

revelled too much in ignorance' (QS: 51). Contrastingly, in Europe tone has 'grown up at home and in the family' (QS: 39), which is why their 'discriminated units of sound and sense' remain comparatively safe. This section will address the ways in which, in *The Awkward Age* (as well as, more briefly, in *The Turn of the Screw* and *What Maisie Knew*), James explores how one learns and absorbs 'tone' in the societies he depicts, especially by showing the process of its acquisition and the stages of its use.

The 'perfect system on which the awkward age is handled in most other European societies' (LC2: 1124) is described in James's 'Preface' to the novel of that name:

We live notoriously, as I suppose every age lives, in an "epoch of transition"; but it may still be said of the French for instance, I assume, that their social scheme absolutely provides against awkwardness. That is it would be, by this scheme, so infinitely awkward, so awkward beyond any patching-up, for the hovering female young to be conceived as present at "good" talk, that their presence is, theoretically at least, not permitted till their youth has been promptly corrected by marriage – in which case they have ceased to be merely young. (LC2: 1124-25)

For David McWhirter, *The Awkward Age* 'reconfigure[es]' the past into the 'inevitable in-betweenness of historical process', where history is understood as a 'perpetually awkward situation' and 'every age as a process, rather than an epoch, of transition'.<sup>52</sup> The inverted commas over the "epoch of transition" not only provide an 'ironic commentary on the urgent exceptionalism of so much *fin de siècle* rhetoric' of 'narratives of collapse, exhaustion and degeneracy', but also reconfigures 'the disjunctions and discontinuities' of such rhetoric into the 'disorientating but potentially productive "awkwardness" of what James calls an 'appealing

---

<sup>52</sup> David McWhirter, 'What's Awkward About *The Awkward Age*?', in *Centuries' Ends, Narrative Means*, ed. by Robert Newman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 212-21 (p. 215).

“modernity” in the novel’s ‘Preface’ (LC2: 1123).<sup>53</sup> The “epoch of transition” also echoes Arnold’s distinction between the ‘*epoch of concentration*’ and the ‘epoch of expansion’, the means by which our ‘spiritual horizon would thus gradually widen’ rather than contract.<sup>54</sup> J.S. Mill is another important source here, declaring in ‘The Spirit of the Age’ (1831) that the ‘first of the leading peculiarities of the present age is, that it is an age of transition. Mankind have outgrown old institutions and old doctrines, and have not yet acquired new ones’.<sup>55</sup> This awkwardness concentrates the tension at the heart of the ‘acquisition of a new ear’ between the demand for contemporary innovation and historical return, the former always making recourse to the latter, and representation of the latter always being necessarily partial.

Unlike many other texts discussed in this chapter, *The Awkward Age* is an ‘English’ rather than ‘International’ fiction. But the awkwardness of the depicted transition to a new ear is cultural as well as historical in kind; the awkwardness of Nanda Brookenham, the novel’s ‘ingenious mind’, lies as much in her ‘age’ as in the fact that the English talk into which she is initiated has to negotiate between the competing demands of two national models: in James’s understanding, French talk will never be sacrificed to their youth, so ‘[t]he better the talk prevailing in any circle, accordingly, the more organised, the more complete, the element of precaution and exclusion’ (LC2: 1125). Because this ‘freedom’ is ‘menaced by the inevitable irruption of the ingenious mind’, there is thus the need to either relinquish it or the ‘charm’ of the ‘circle’ itself; a young girl might be ‘married off the day after her irruption, or better still the day before it, to remove her from the sphere of the play of mind’ (LC2: 1124). The American theory, by contrast, is that ‘talk should never become “better” than the female young’ (LC2: 1125), consistent with the disparaging accounts of tone in James’s writings on American culture. The former

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>54</sup> Arnold, ‘The Function of Criticism’, in *Culture and Anarchy*, pp. 139, 144.

<sup>55</sup> J.S. Mill, *The Spirit of the Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), p. 6. Edward Alexander attributes this aspect of Arnold’s thought to Saint-Simon as well as to Mill, but notes that the idea might have ‘become current coin even in laggard England’, *Matthew Arnold and John Stuart Mill*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Routledge, 2010), p. 40.

refuses to sacrifice the general for the individual, whilst the latter refuses to sacrifice the particular for the general.

Lacking the ‘wise arrangement’ of the French ‘social scheme’ (which ‘provides against awkwardness’), English talk is greatly affected by ‘compromise’ (LC2: 1125) between code and conduct, contributing to the ‘awkwardness’ of the specific ‘stage’ of transition. English talk wants both the relative freedom of American society, where there is no ‘good talk’ and therefore no awkward age, and the relative security of the French model, where ‘the female young’ are ‘kept in a convent until they have reached the awkward age; and since this happens also to be the marriageable age, they are then “by arrangement” married off with the utmost expedition’.<sup>56</sup> As the Duchess in the novel observes of English manners: ‘[i]t’s all a muddle, a compromise, a monstrosity, like everything else you produce; there’s nothing in it that goes on all-fours’ (AA: 46), echoing James’s own account of the ‘consequent muddle, if the term be not too gross’ arising from Nanda’s ‘failure of successful arrangement’ (LC: 1126). Nanda’s compromise involves a ‘dramatic struggle’ between naïve innocence and adult worldliness; she must acquire a ‘tone as far as possible removed from that of the nursery and the schoolroom’ (LC2: 1123), but not so much as to render her unmarriageable.

If this suggests that knowing too much is as exposing as knowing too little, then compromise (a ‘partial surrender of one’s position, for the sake of coming to terms’ (OED 4.a)) becomes essential to avoid being compromised, in the sense of being exposed. The risk of being compromised is never far from the surface in *The Awkward Age*, just as Lord Petherton’s ‘dark blue double-breasted coat [had] an air of tightness that just failed of compromising his tailor’ (AA: 64).<sup>57</sup> When Nanda’s

---

<sup>56</sup> Krook, pp. 136-37.

<sup>57</sup> Mrs Brookenham admires Mitchy’s refusal to ‘compromise’ Lord Petherton, though it is just as possible that her praise only seeks to implicitly to confirm that he *is* having an affair with Jane, rather than an admiration for Mitchy’s loyalty (AA: 71). Vanderbank refuses to confirm Mrs Brookenham’s passion for him to Mr Longdon because it might ‘rather compromise her’ (AA: 227).

reaction to Mr Longdon's wish that she should get married is described, it reveals the extent to which she avoids 'compromising her innocence':

His tone betrayed so special a meaning that the words had a sound of suddenness; yet there was always in Nanda's face that odd preparedness of the young person who has unlearned surprise through the habit, in company, of studiously not compromising her innocence by blinking at things said. (AA: 142)

It is not immediately clear how 'surprise', which is supposedly involuntary, may be something 'learned' or 'unlearned'. However, it is not surprise that is relinquished, but only the appearance of being so, and Nanda has to cultivate this calibrated ignorance. For Margaret Walters, '[i]n order not to compromise her social innocence she has to "unlearn" surprise, to understand so as to appear not to understand, to interpret silence silently.'<sup>58</sup> But this concession between knowledge and ignorance also depicts the challenge of 'growing up in a society where growth is impossible, and where adolescence is simply an awkward gap between childhood and adulthood'.<sup>59</sup>

In James's work of the late 1890's, children often appear to be 'born to discriminate' (NSBMY 466), and thereby resemble 'monster[s] of precocity' (CWAD2: 495). In *The Turn of the Screw*, Miles's discrimination squeezes out of a single question more implication than the governess ever thought possible:

He had really a manner of his own, and I could only try to keep up with him. "Well, do you like it?"

He stood there smiling; then at last he put into two words – "Do *you*?" – more discrimination than I had ever heard two words contain. Before I had time to deal with that, however, he continued as if with the sense that this was an impertinence to be softened. (TMA: 157-58)

---

<sup>58</sup> Margaret Walters, 'Keeping the Place Tidy for the Young Female Mind: *The Awkward Age*', in *The Air of Reality*, ed. by Goode, pp. 190-218 (p. 203).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.

Miles has been ranging free at Bly, taking long walks and breakfasting alone, seeking to prove that the governess has nothing ‘more to teach him’ and thereby liberate himself from her tutelage. Wise beyond his years, this tone unsettles the narrator by inverting the relations of control and passivity that might conceivably exist between an adult and a child. The governess becomes the object rather than the agent of discrimination – a turn or rotary movement in her position. Miles even recognises the intelligence of his discrimination which exhibits a mastery of self-control, and proceeds to temper his impertinence. The governess fears such ‘secret precocity’ proves ‘the poison of an influence’ (*Tma*: 121). Tone is in itself a measure of knowledge, and in this case, suggests an exposure to aspects of life (especially sexuality) that a child should not, at this age, acquire. The previous chapter argued that the ‘audible intelligence’ depended on the operation of tone as such a test, applying the ‘pressure of the attention articulately *sounded*’ in order to squeeze out of expression every possible implication (*LC2*: 1339).<sup>60</sup> Discrimination, in the sense of the ability to exercise judgement through difference, is another, as when in *The American*, Mr Tristram’s ‘grimace seemed a turn of the screw of discrimination’ when he tells Christopher Newman that he possess no aesthetic sensibility and does not ‘do so much in pictures’ (*A*: 18). Both these senses combine when intonation is *itself* a means of discrimination, which in Miles’s case is part of James’s fascination with ‘the complicated but apparently necessary fiction by which children are viewed as blank innocents, yet at the same time immensely capable of depravity’.<sup>61</sup>

The ability for James’s youngest protagonists to display this kind of discriminatory intelligence powerfully alert to the multiple relations which might inhere within any utterance replete with social implication is thus not an uncomplicated advantage. In *What Maisie Knew*, Mrs Wix defends Ida before Sir Claude (Ida’s second husband) upon hearing the news that Ida has been spotted with

---

<sup>60</sup> In a *Notebook* entry (December 17 1909), James describes how his subject matter, which would become *The Ivory Tower*, will only surrender its full potential ‘under the pressure and the screw’ (*CN* 259).

<sup>61</sup> Walters, ‘Keeping’, in *The Air of Reality*, ed. by Goode, p. 213.

another man (the as yet unknown Mr Tischbein), and does so in a tone that in turn reveals Maisie's own developing auditive intelligence:

“What she saw for her daughter was that there must at last be a *decent* person!”

Maisie was quick enough to jump a little at the sound of this implication that such a person was what Sir Claude was not; the next instant, however, she more profoundly guessed against whom the discrimination was made. She was therefore left the more surprised at the complete candour with which he embraced the worst.

“If she's bent on decent persons, why has she given her to me? You don't call me a decent person, and I'll do Ida the justice that she never did. I think I'm as indecent as any one, and that there's nothing in my behaviour that makes my wife's surrender a bit less ignoble!” (*WMK*: 318-19)

Maisie initially understands Mrs Wix's discrimination to imply that Sir Claude is indecent; Mrs Wix suggests that Maisie's mother is having an affair with this new man because she knows that Maisie, at last, requires someone '*decent*'. However, Maisie then 'guessed' that the discrimination actually might be directed against another: Mrs Beale, *née* Miss Overmore, 'the worst person of all', Maisie's prior governess with whom Sir Claude is having an affair (*WMK*: 319). Maisie's intelligence is evident in this ability to hear two possible discriminations within a single tone, even whilst quick 'enough' reminds us that Maisie is still a child. In moments such as these, '[w]e are simultaneously aware of Maisie as both child and adult. The adults exploit both her innocence and the knowingness she needs to survive, until by the end they have destroyed the child.'<sup>62</sup>

Miles exerts his discrimination of tone through the voice and Maisie through the ear; both suggest a relation between discriminatory precociousness and 'narratives of *Bildung* or development', in Kevin Ohi's words.<sup>63</sup> The social questions surrounding what one can 'say "in front of" a child' thus become inseparable from

---

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>63</sup> Kevin Ohi, 'Children', in *Henry James in Context*, ed. by McWhirter, pp. 115-25 (p. 117).

aesthetic ones.<sup>64</sup> The issue of how to ‘preserve or create innocence (Pansy in *The Portrait of a Lady*, Aggie and Nanda in *The Awkward Age*) as a represented social problem comes to stand in for a question of novelistic representation’, insofar as children exemplify an ‘adherence to a “limited” centre of consciousness’ that parallels James’s own practice of point of view at the level of style.<sup>65</sup> The question of how a child might affect the freedom of ‘talk’ becomes a question of perspective that is ‘at once limited *and* unknowable’, unsettling ‘the pieties of childhood innocence’.<sup>66</sup> In this way, James might be said to pursue a kind of negative *Bildungsroman*, whereby development undermines as well as edifies the self.<sup>67</sup> *What Maisie Knew* might suggest that she no longer knows something she used to (What Maisie Knew), or that she knew something that no one else knows (What Maisie Knew), leaving open whether epistemological loss or its discovery is the novel’s primary concern, depending on the intonation with which the title is heard.<sup>68</sup>

In *The Awkward Age*, critics have understandably tended to focus on Nanda in this regard, relegating Mrs Brookenham to the depravities of her society’s talk. For Margaret Walters, Nanda lacks what she calls ‘a principle of growth’ (AA: 178): ‘[h]er story is a negation of the idea of growth; in this she resembles the much younger Maisie’.<sup>69</sup> Yet unlike Maisie, the question of Nanda’s development is inseparable from her mother’s, not only insofar as it embodies the broader transition of society, but also because Nanda forces her mother to recognise the termination of her own youth (a situation exacerbated by their love of the same man). ‘[T]hey had

---

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>67</sup> For Alfred Habegger, James’s fiction and autobiographies depict ‘the Bildungsroman of the artist as queer moralist, who triumphs by learning the trick of transforming painful subjection into a highly responsive and responsible kind of living (Maisie) or a highly ethical kind of art (James)’, “‘What Maisie knew’: Henry James’s Bildungsroman of the artist as queer moralist”, in *Enacting History in Henry James: Narrative, Power, and Ethics*, ed. by Gert Buelens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 93-108 (p. 104).

<sup>68</sup> See Adrian Poole, ‘Introduction’ to *What Maisie Knew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. vii-xxvi (p. xxii).

<sup>69</sup> Walters, p. 216.



for each other, in manner and tone, such a fund of consideration as might almost have given it the stamp of diplomacy' (AA: 264), and yet underneath this tone of consideration lies a violence which finds its realisation in the 'smash' at Tishy Grendon's. As Tessa Hadley notes, Mrs Brookenham embodies this awkward stage as much as her daughter, that 'opaque transitional moment at which discourse becomes sceptically aware of its own premises and yet cannot articulate itself outside a parodistic relationship to the old habits, the old cadences, the old gestures'.<sup>70</sup> Thus, an examination of Mrs Brook's control of 'tone' may also tell us something about the nature of her daughter's transition, the extent to which innocence is entwined with knowledge, and the way that discrimination operates as a simultaneously corrupting and refining force.

By discriminating through the voice, Mrs Brookenham seeks to maintain control over this 'transitional moment'. When Mitchy asks her, "[a]nd where's the child, this time"?' she responds: "[w]hy do you say 'this time'? – as if it were different from any other time"!' (AA: 65) Mrs Brookenham is still at this moment seeking to preserve something of Nanda's dignity, discriminating in order to refuse the implication that she is out of control. This intonational intelligence extends to the suppression as well as the activation of the implications of emphasis. When she asks Mitchy "'are you happy"?' he replies "'[n]ot perhaps as *you* would have tried to make me'" (AA: 388), by which presumably he means, not as happy as he would have been had he married Nanda, which was Mrs Brookenham's intention. To this she responds: "'[w]ell, you've still *got* me, you know'" (AA: 388). Had she stressed 'me', she would be making a distinction between herself and Nanda, highlighting the fact that Mitchy has lost her daughter. Mrs Brookenham emphasises what he possesses, thereby transforming his statement ('not has happy as *you* would have tried to make me') from a reference to his unrealised desire to marry Nanda to a literal statement that she will continue to be responsible for his felicity.

---

<sup>70</sup> Tessa Hadley, *Henry James and the Imagination of Pleasure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 80. Hadley notes how 'Mrs Brook's whole set is defined by being in transition. The past, the previous generation, is a matter of constant reference', *ibid.*, p. 77.

Mrs Brookenham's emphases often conceal moral difficulty in this way, choosing 'the tone of tact and taste' (AA: 357). When she says that Nanda "understands, I think, that what I expect of her is to make it [her stay with Mr Longdon] as long as possible", she subsequently transforms Vanderbank's emphasis, that they "must put things for him [Mr Longdon]", into one of passivity: "[w]e must *let* him act" (AA: 242). This deliberate suppression of 'too vivid a sense of her particular emphasis' (AA: 242) is motivated by her desire for Mr Longdon's fiscal endorsement of her daughter. Mrs Brookenham is particularly adept at this kind of contrastive emphasis, shifting the emphasis retrospectively upon a word or phrase, highlighting a nuance or emphasis that had previously gone unnoticed as a form of social regulation which operates by activating or suppressing social relations, depending on whether she wants to create disorder or control.

Discrimination is both essential and compromising for any aspiring social initiate, and this is apparent when discrimination falls short of the high standard required of it in such developed social circumstances, as when a speaker exerts a discrimination of emphasis only to be exposed by the discovery that their implication is misjudged. When Mrs Brookenham tells Mr Longdon that she wants Nanda back in order to marry her, he replies that he thought they appreciated placing Nanda in his care. The Duchess interrupts, insisting that they '*do*' like it, and upon seeing Edward Brookenham enter the room, adds that he will confirm her conviction. Edward, however, does nothing of the sort:

"Do you, dear," she appealed, "want Nanda back from Mr Longdon?"

Edward plainly could be trusted to feel in his quiet way that the oracle must be a match for the priestess. "'Want' her, Jane? We wouldn't *take* her." As if knowing quite what he was about, he looked at his wife only after he had spoken.

[...]

His reply had complete success, to which there could scarce have afterwards been a positive denial that some sound of amusement even from Mr Longdon himself had in its degree contributed. (AA: 350)

As the ‘sound of amusement’ made ‘even from Mr Longdon’ suggests, he does occasionally participate in this free talk. When he discusses with Vanderbank the names they call each other, Vanderbank says that the Duchess never calls him “anything but ‘Vanderbank’ unless she calls me ‘*caro mio*’”, adding that “[i]t wouldn’t have taken much to make her appeal to *you* with an ‘I say, Longdon!’ I can quite hear her” (AA: 13). In response, Longdon, ‘focusing the effect of the sketch, pointed its moral with an indulgent: “[o]h well, a *foreign* duchess!” He could make his distinctions’ (AA: 13). Longdon’s emphasis either suggests an uncharacteristically complacent extravagance (‘[h]e *could* make his distinctions’), or if we hear it differently (‘[h]e could make *his* distinctions’), might suggest that the nature of the discrimination differs in kind from those made by Mrs Brookenham. Here, however, Mr Longdon clarifies Edward’s intonational *faux pas*: it is not “‘for *me* the Duchess appeals” (AA: 351). To this the Duchess adds that Edward has spoken without his cue: “[i]t’s from your wife”, and thus “[i]f you wished to be stiff with our friend here [Mr Longdon] you’ve really been so with *her*; which comes, no doubt, from the absence between you of proper preconcerted action” (AA: 351). Edward tries to enforce a discrimination that Longdon can have Nanda as long as he wants, which he presumably envisages as an act of generosity. But this discrimination unwittingly contradicts his wife, and so the ensuing laughter is powerfully compromising, and exposes rather than espouses Edward’s position.

Mrs Brookenham aspires to maintain control through her discrimination of tone, as evident in her exchange with the inauspiciously named Mr Cashmore. Mrs Brookenham discusses his wife and the nature of her relationship with him:

Mrs Brook seeing it all from dim depths, tracked it further and further. “We’ve talked her over so!”

Mr Cashmore groaned as if too conscious of it. “Indeed we have!” “I mean *we*” – and it was wonderful how her accent discriminated. “We’ve talked you too – but of course we talk every one.” She had a pause through which there glimmered a ray from luminous hours, the inner intimacy which, privileged as he was, he couldn’t pretend to share; then she broke out almost impatiently: “We’re looking after her – leave her to *us*!” (AA: 140)

Here Mr Cashmore misunderstands her referent, taking “we” to refer to himself and Mrs Brookenham. This interpretation is perfectly understandable, and might very well have been made by the reader, not least because they have just been having a conversation with each other. But by placing the emphasis on “we”, her accent, we are told, wonderfully discriminates that she has in fact been referring to her coterie, and not to Mr Cashmore. Through its stress, “we” (like “us”) is transformed from a collective pronoun of inclusion into its opposite, one of exclusion. Mr Cashmore enters into what appears to be a relationship of mutual confidence, but, with a deft shift of emphasis, this is reversed. He realises that his relations with his wife have been the subject of gossip so that his position shifts from critic to victim. Mrs Brookenham performs the very point she asserts, since “we” (her circle) depend upon the supersubtlety of which Mr Cashmore is incapable (he has just said to Mrs Brookenham “I don’t understand you” (AA 196)). This intonational somersault helps to establish the ease and quickness with which discrimination is used to exclude others from the sphere of the initiated.

For many, the awkward age refers not just to a moment of personal development or transition, but to the 1890’s more generally, whereby traditional social forms no longer maintain purchase upon the present, and style is separated from meaning, ‘social status’ from ‘social function’, ‘morality from convention’.<sup>71</sup> Conversational discriminations are thus understood to operate merely for their own sake, a self-promoting refinement undermining stable communication.<sup>72</sup> However, as

---

<sup>71</sup> Walters, p. 192.

<sup>72</sup> For Tzvetan Todorov, the novel’s ‘conversational obliquity’, where it is impossible to state one thing without implying its opposite, has ‘reached such a degree that it is no longer obliquity’, a condition which provides the simultaneous ‘regret for having lost the world, joy at the autonomous proliferation of language’, ‘The Verbal Age’, trans. by Patricia Martin Gibby, *Critical Inquiry*, 2 (1977), 351-71 (369). Todorov draws upon Leo Bersani’s claim that ‘[c]onversational discriminations are self-promoting, and, in its most refined and satisfyingly designed state, language entertains *personality out of its existence*’, Leo Bersani, *A Future for Astyanax* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1976), pp. 140-41. Todorov credits his debt to Leo Bersani, ‘The Verbal Age’, 351.

David McWhirter notes, ‘language, in *The Awkward Age*, is never really autonomous; it is always in relational tension with the world, always by definition social and socialized; it is, precisely, the “awkward situation” in which history makes, and is made by, those who participate in its processes’.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, because so much of the novel’s expression occurs alongside language, intonation never exists merely for its own sake, but is key to the circulation of knowledge and the possession of social power, even if the line between corruption and refinement is often one of the hardest discriminations to draw. However, as Walters notes, the novel registers James’s simultaneous admiration of, and horror at, the social values depicted and the consequences of compromise; there is something of the ‘connoisseur’s interest in the suffering caused by the English tendency to muddle through’ expressed in his ‘Preface’.<sup>74</sup>

One final understanding of the awkwardness of this ‘stage’ is in a generic as well as a developmental sense, as not only describing to the transition from adolescence to adulthood which Mrs Brookenham’s discriminations seek to control, but also the location of the novel between the competing demands of a play and a novel, insofar as its dialogue resembles a play text which appears to speak for itself.<sup>75</sup> ‘James went indeed so far in this direction’, Sergio Perosa notes, ‘as to cut out as narrative interferences the “stage directions” themselves, including the harmless “said he” or “said she”: the dialogue, pure and simple, had to speak for

---

<sup>73</sup> McWhirter, ‘What’s Awkward?’, p. 220.

<sup>74</sup> Walters, p. 195.

<sup>75</sup> Percy Lubbock notes that that the novel ‘might indeed be printed as a play; whatever is not dialogue is simply a kind of amplified stage-direction’, *Craft*, p. 190; for Elizabeth Stevenson, the novel’s success derives from the way its characters ‘appear as if upon a stage. They speak, they act, and all that the innocent bystander – the reader – knows comes to him through these, as it were, public actions’, *The Crooked Corridor: A Study of Henry James* (London: Macmillan, 1949), pp. 150-51. See also Oscar Cargill, *The Novels of Henry James* (New York: Hafner, 1961), pp. 263-64; Walter Isle, *Experiments in Form: Henry James’s Novels, 1896-1901* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 43; F.W. Dupee, *Henry James* (New York: Sloane, 1951), p. 197; Joseph Wiesenfarth, *Henry James and the Dramatic Analogy: A Study of the Major Novels of the Middle Period* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1963), p. 129.

itself'.<sup>76</sup> For Perosa, James's 'experiment with the *roman dialogué* here seems to be well suited to the story precisely because it is through the dialogues of the grown-ups that Nanda Brookenham is exposed to the danger of corruption'.<sup>77</sup>

James's 1895 'Note' to *Theatricals* describes this apparent extensibility between the performance of a play and its reading, advocating the introduction of an 'unacted play', even if one has a 'lively general mistrust of the preface to a work of fiction and the explanation of a work of art':

Of a published play, however, it cannot exactly be said that it has not been performed at all; for the disconcerted author at least – if, as he has wrought, the thing has arrived at adequate vividness – the printed book itself grows mildly theatrical, the frustrated effort approximately positive. (*CP*: 347)<sup>78</sup>

Drawing on Garrett Stewart's notion of 'evocalization',<sup>79</sup> critics have understood this passage as envisaging 'the page itself as a stage of phonemes always silently sounded whenever writing is read', whose implications 'are revolutionary in making literal sense of the novel as a performative text that makes things happen on the page rather than narrowly representing reality pictorially'.<sup>80</sup> This may be true, but James nevertheless preserves a degree of reticence about the status of the 'naked text', which here exists as an approximation ('*approximately* positive'; '*mildly* theatrical', emphasis added). This text is not *unperformed* exactly, but it is still no more than a 'substitution' possessing '*adequate* vividness', an 'argued equivalent' for the 'representation originally aimed at' (which might have otherwise have 'spoken for itself').

---

<sup>76</sup> Sergio Perosa, *Henry James and the Experimental Novel* (Charlottesville: Virginia University Press, 1978), pp. 69-70.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> I would like to acknowledge Philip Horne's paper, 'Attending to *The Awkward Age*', delivered in Trieste, July 2019, for drawing this passage to my attention.

<sup>79</sup> Vericat, 505. Vericat here alludes to Garrett Stewart's location of reading 'between a merely evoked aurality and an oral vocalizing: the zone of evocalization', *Reading Voices: Literature and the Phonotext* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1990), p. 2.

<sup>80</sup> Vericat, 505.

James's reluctance to attribute performance entirely to the 'naked text' signifies a generic discomfort propounded by the fact that publishing play texts was itself a comparatively unusual practice at this time. 'That no one ever *does* read a play has long been a commonplace of the wisdom of booksellers', James writes in regard to Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman* in 'London' (1897), although Ibsen 'contradicts the custom and confounds the prejudice' (CWAD2: 454).<sup>81</sup> In 'After the Play' (1889), Dorriforth complains that "'one doesn't know what one is discussing. There is no 'authority' – nothing is ever published'" (CWAD2: 356). Indeed, it was only after the American copyright bill of 1891 that authors could publish their plays without fear of them being pirated (CWAD2: 363-4 n.10).<sup>82</sup>

The partial attribution of performance to the novel suggests that the 'divine distinction of the act of a play' in the novel's 'Preface' is not an entirely accurate description, especially when the reader's attention is drawn to elements that might easily escape our notice were the scene to be performed in a theatre.<sup>83</sup> 'On stage,' Frances Gillen notes, 'the manner in which the actor recites his lines determines the tone of the dialogue. Several times, however, at crucial moments, James omitted this indication of tone, seemingly in order to create a veil of ambiguity.'<sup>84</sup> Such omissions can be on occasion especially conspicuous. When Vanderbank audibly reflects upon the curiousness of Nanda's "'fear'" of him, if this fear is "'true'", she replies that *she* is "'true'" (AA: 176). Nanda's insistence on fidelity represents an offer that only makes their marriage the more impossible by infringing the boundaries of 'modesty and segregation' upon which male desire depends.<sup>85</sup> Yet the narrator refrains from specifying the 'intelligence' required to describe the effect of

---

<sup>81</sup> Also noted by Horne, 'Attending to *The Awkward Age*'.

<sup>82</sup> See Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of Late Nineteenth-Century Drama, 1850-1900*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1946), I, pp. 71-72.

<sup>83</sup> 'And it would have taken many such sounds on his part to represent a spirit of response discernible to any one but his wife' (AA: 55). See also AA, pp. 446, 157.

<sup>84</sup> Frances Gillen, 'The Dramatist in His Drama: Theory vs. Effect in *The Awkward Age*', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 12 (1971), 663-74 (669).

<sup>85</sup> Hadley, p. 71.

Nanda's 'tone' beyond noting Vanderbank's 'just discernible flush' because Vanderbank could not himself 'have expressed' it (*AA*: 176).

Occasionally, these vocal directions are not only conspicuously withheld, but seemingly mutually conflicting. Near the beginning of the novel, Mrs Brookenham converses with her husband, Edward, about the appropriateness or otherwise of letting their daughter, Nanda, "'sit downstairs'". Edward claims that he thought it was time "'a year ago'", to which his wife derisively replies that "'it wasn't'" (*AA*: 63). Edward accepts this, but adds that she herself admitted that Nanda was ready, to which Mrs Brookenham discriminates: "'[s]he was ready – yes. But I wasn't. I am now,'" Mrs Brookenham, with a fine emphasis on her adverb, proclaimed' (*AA*: 64). As we read, we stress the pronoun 'she' according to its italicisation. But James's subsequent gloss tells us that she spoke with a 'fine emphasis on her adverb' ('now'), which is not itself italicised. It is not exactly that this is a mistake; the peculiarity occurs in the *Harper's Weekly* serialised edition, the subsequent 1899 editions, and the *New York Edition*.<sup>86</sup> Moreover since they are different sentences, the two intonations are not mutually exclusive either. However, this does not wholly account for why 'now' is not in italics and why 'she' is not described as being emphasised, an ambiguity further exacerbated by the brevity of the sentences, placing the two alternative vocal notations in closer proximity with each other.

---

<sup>86</sup> Henry James, 'The Awkward Age', *Harper's Weekly*, 42 (July-December 1898), 1011-15 (1015); Henry James, *The Awkward Age* (London: Heinemann, 1899), pp. 58; *The Awkward Age* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1899), pp. 63-64; *NYE*, IX, p. 76.



This tension between typography and commentary raised by Mrs Brookenham's discrimination is not unique to *The Awkward Age*,<sup>87</sup> but is nevertheless particularly marked in a novel where the very notion of narrative interpretation is ostensibly disavowed (*LC2*: 1131), and yet that includes descriptions of tone peculiar to print. This tension reinforces the awkward generic status of the work itself, neither wholly a record of cues for performed conversation, nor a dialogue with commentary of the kind we might expect to find in a novel. For David Kurnick, rather than viewing this work as a return to fiction after the disappointments of writing for the London stage, it is

perhaps best understood as a blueprint for an impossible or withheld performance. The text's refusal to vivify its imaginary universe also highlights the relative sensory deprivation of reading and so suggests that reading is a definitionally inadequate substitute for theatrical attendance.<sup>88</sup>

However, the secondary sense of the awkward stage suggests how 'vivification' might be contained rather than refused by the withholding of performance cues, a kind of 'play' that can direct competing possibilities for voicing without stipulation. Indeed, withholding a performance does not make it 'impossible' to perform exactly; this kind of reticence might itself operate as a powerfully expressive resource, so that reading is by no means a 'definitionally inadequate substitute', in Kurnick's terms. Both implications of the 'awkward stage' in a developmental as well as generic sense

---

<sup>87</sup> There is a comparable moment in *The Outcry* (1911) when Lady Grace speaks to Lady Sandgate about her sister Kitty, and the manner in which she has told Lord John that Grace is willing to speak to her in the interests of romance. Lady Sandgate asks the following question in response: "[b]ut what is she going to gain financially," Lady Sandgate pursued with a strong emphasis on her adverb, "by working up our friend's confidence in your listening to him – if you *are* to listen?" (*O*: 36). No such ambiguity arises in the play version of this dialogue (*CP*: 770). When Miss Overmore explains to Maisie that she will understand when she is older how "dreadfully bold" a young lady has to be if they are 'to do exactly what she had done', commentary and typography more straightforwardly correspond: "Fortunately your papa appreciates it; he appreciates it *immensely*" – that was one of the things Miss Overmore also said, with a striking insistence on the adverb' (*WMK*: 26).

<sup>88</sup> David Kurnick, "Horrible Impossible", 110.

are inseparable from each other; the ‘stage’ as an awkward transition from ignorance to knowledge occurs through the depiction of tone as neither wholly theatrical nor entirely novelistic, and where refinement is indistinguishable from corruption. The dual implications of the awkward stage, moreover, might be forgiven insofar as they reflect the pun of James’s own title.<sup>89</sup>

## 2.4 The Rigours of Trust

The title for this chapter derives from James’s ‘Preface’ to *The Ambassadors*:

The actual man’s note, from the first of our seeing it struck, is the note of discrimination, just as his drama is to become, under stress, the drama of discrimination. It would have been his blest imagination, we have seen, that had already helped him to discriminate; the element that was for so much of the pleasure of my cutting thick, as I have intimated, into his intellectual, into his moral substance. (*LC2*: 1311-12)

Strether’s ‘drama’ of discrimination most obviously refers to the ‘break down’ of his ‘moral scheme of the most approved pattern’. However, the maturity of his imagination ‘*already* helped him to discriminate’ (emphasis added), hence ‘cutting thick’, which sounds either surgical or sculptural, intimates a fullness that is necessary if discrimination is to represent a sufficient subject for James’s novel. Strether’s discriminatory plenitude is thus both a consolidation of personal experience and a condition of its collapse. Rather than signalling an absolute break with his past or a straightforward transition from innocence to experience, Strether’s

---

<sup>89</sup> Susan Mizruchi notes that ‘*The Awkward Age*, whose titular type refers both to historical and biological transition, suggests a similar ideological conflation of social change and feminine disorder’, ‘Reproducing Women in *The Awkward Age*’, *Representations*, 38 (1992), 101-30 (102). For Pamela Thurschwell, the ‘novel’s titular pun equates the awkward, individual, in-between time of adolescence with the awkward, collective, in-between time of the *fin de siècle*, leading us both towards the turn-of-the-century “invention” of the modern adolescent, and towards James’s exploration of the culturally constructed nature of age as an identity category’, ‘Bringing Nanda Forward, or Acting Your Age in *The Awkward Age*’, *Critical Quarterly*, 58.2 (2006), 72-90 (72).

transformation thus consists of a gradual modification and improvement of his own, historically achieved, conditions for discriminatory sensitivity. The following section explores both the way that tone causes the collapse of Strether's moral scheme and his subsequent recognition of the fullness of tone.

Most critics have understood the richness of Strether's 'drama of discrimination' to be primarily visual in nature, a quality of either moral or physical perceptiveness.<sup>90</sup> For Nicola Bradbury, the 'discriminated occasion' becomes *The Ambassadors*' 'basic structural unit' because 'the growth of consciousness in Strether enables him to achieve a more "adequate" conception of "reality" as he understands what is behind the forms of social behaviour which he sees', and the 'discriminating appreciation required from the reader in this process mirrors that developing in James's protagonist within the novel'.<sup>91</sup> Locating discrimination in the faculty of perception is hardly surprising given James's account of the 'discriminated preparation' involved in the 'fusion and synthesis of picture' (LC2: 1318) described later in this 'Preface', or his insistence that the novel's material is 'taken absolutely

---

<sup>90</sup> Exploring Strether's 'discriminating gaze', Phyllis van Slyck sees the novel as a progression towards the discovery of this kind of 'discriminatory purpose' whereby Strether 'redefines action as a powerful kind of reflective vision', 'Knowledge and Representation in *The Ambassadors*: Strether's Discriminating Gaze', *Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts*, 39.4 (1997), 557-79 (559). This draws upon Susan M. Griffin's refusal of the false opposition between observation and experience, which casts the Jamesian protagonists into the role of a "'passive observer", a cerebral, almost bodiless being, completely detached from the world of experience', *The Historical Eye*, p. 396. J.A. Ward also argues that, for Strether, 'vision is action; it represents a full participation in experience', 'Strether's Vision of Evil', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 14 (1959), 45-58 (45). For William Greenslade, 'Strether must discriminate between a variety of appearances as structured by the conventions of civilized society', 'The Power of Advertising: Chad Newsome and the Meaning of Paris in *The Ambassadors*', *English Literary History*, 49 (1982), 99-122 (103). Daniel Mark Fogel suggests the novel pursues 'the intrinsic value of the process of vision', *Henry James and The Structure of the Romantic Imagination* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), p. 47. Strether's drama thus consists in his 'renewal of moral discrimination, the realization of the difference between inauthentic and authentic appearances', Nicola Bradbury, *Henry James: The Later Novels* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 38.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

for the stuff of drama' through its organisation into 'scenes' (LC2: 1317-8).<sup>92</sup>

However, few critics have understood discrimination as a quality of audition or even intonation.<sup>93</sup>

This oversight is especially surprising given that 'the drama of discrimination' is not only accompanied by the 'note of discrimination' but also occurs after the description of Strether's 'peculiar tone', 'tone' suggesting at once a temperament and a vocal style:

[Strether] wouldn't have indulged in his peculiar tone without a reason; it would take a felt predicament or a false position to give him so ironic an accent. One hadn't been noting "tones" all one's life without recognising when one heard it the voice of the false position (LC2: 1309).

To 'note' a "'tone'" implies at once a notation and, tautologously, a sounding. That James has been noting such tones all of his life recalls his description of the novel's germ as a "'note" that I was to recognise on the spot', given 'as usual, by the spoken word' (LC2: 1305).<sup>94</sup> The 'false position' is subsequently identified as the devastated 'moral scheme' in the face of the 'vivid facts' (LC2: 1311).<sup>95</sup> The 'first' time this 'note of discrimination' is 'struck' occurs in the novel's opening paragraph:

---

<sup>92</sup> Discrimination is understood as 'scenic' in the sense implied by the 'discriminated occasion' in the 'Preface' to *The Wings of the Dove*: 'that aspect of the subject which we have our choice of treating either as picture or scenically' (LC2: 1297-98). James admired Maupassant in 1888 for 'the quick, direct discrimination of his eye', an eye that '*selects* unerringly, unscrupulously, almost impudently – catches the particular thing in which the character of the object or the scene resides' (LC2: 526).

<sup>93</sup> Bradbury, ed., notes the 'extended series of acoustic metaphors', 'Introduction' to *The Ambassadors*, CFHJ, XVIII, pp. xxx-lxxxvi (p. lxxxii).

<sup>94</sup> Namely the exchange between Howard Sturges and William Dean Howells in James McNeill Whistler's garden in Paris (31 October 1895) (CN: 140-41). For James, the fact of Howells having 'scarcely been in Paris, ever, in former days' is one that 'touches me – I can see him [Howells] – I can hear him' (CN: 141).

<sup>95</sup> For a reflection on the implications of this phrase from a post-structuralist perspective, see Julie Rivkin, *False Positions: The Representational Logics of Henry James's Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 4-5.

Mixed with everything was the apprehension, already, on Strether's part, that he would, at best, throughout, prove the note of Europe in quite a sufficient degree. (*CFHJ* XVIII: 1)

For Ian Watt, one of the few critics to hear discrimination as auditory rather than visual, this 'note of discrimination' sounds within James's own prose: 'the final collapse of the terse rhythm of the parenthesis that isolates the rather awkwardly placed "throughout" [...] enables James to sound the fine full fatal note; there is no limit to the poignant eloquence of "throughout"'.<sup>96</sup> The 'mockingly fateful emphasis' suggests that 'the primacy of the relation between the narrator and the reader has already been noted, as has its connection with the abstraction of the diction, which brings home the distance between the narrator and Strether'.<sup>97</sup> This 'fateful emphasis' thus reveals a further 'discrimination': the isolation of the central protagonist's consciousness for inspection in the third person. Indeed, this kind of 'discrimination' described by Watt is only possible in the third person, and the surrender to the first person only occurs 'if one is prepared *not* to make certain precious discriminations' (*LC2*: 1316).

'Tone is everything in *The Ambassadors*', Tessa Hadley claims, 'it is the very subject of the novel' and is especially audible in the struggle to create the conditions for 'mutual transparency' between 'one tone-world into another', between 'Old World sophisticated *moeurs*' and 'New World decencies. Is there a tone he [Strether] can find – playful? ironic? appealing? – in which he can reconcile a Sarah Pocock or a Mrs Newsome with a Mme de Vionnet?'<sup>98</sup> This struggle also occurs within Strether's own consciousness as well as between those of others. One of the abiding impressions made by Madame de Vionnet upon him is the 'delightful facility, with such a woman, of arriving at a new tone. He thought, as he lay on his back, of all the tones she might make possible if one were to try her' (*CFHJ* XVIII: 345). Strether's

---

<sup>96</sup> Watt, 263.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Hadley, p. 86.

recognition of ‘all the tones she might make possible’ proves Madame de Vionnet’s ‘infinite variety’, whilst her capacity to introduce a ‘new tone’ recalls Eugenia’s ‘different tone’ or the ‘acquisition of a new ear’.<sup>99</sup> But coming as this recognition does just before the discovery of the true nature of the ‘virtuous attachment’ (*CFHJ* XVIII: 112, 113, 114, 117, 125, 137) between Madame de Vionnet and Chad Newsome, the struggle to account for social difference through this ‘new tone’ also undermines his preconceptions. These ‘evolving loyalties and shifting affiliations’, Nicola Bradbury notes, prevent a straightforward analogy between ‘individual consciousness and its shaping in culture’; rather than viewing them as the embodiments of a ‘kind of broad cosmopolitanism’,<sup>100</sup> an ‘ability to be open to cultural difference’ demands an acceptance of the ‘perpetually incomplete and partial perspectives’ of both Chad and Strether.<sup>101</sup>

This simultaneously edifying and undermining quality of Strether’s drama of discrimination is demonstrated when Madame de Vionnet fails to introduce Strether to one of three ‘brilliant strangers’ addressed as “‘Duchesse’”; this was ‘a note he was conscious of as false to the Woollett scale and the Woollett humanity’ (*CFHJ* XVIII: 133). A ‘gentleman’ then ‘led her [Madame de Vionnet] away with a trick of three words; a trick played with a social art of which Strether, looking after them as the four, whose backs were now all turned, moved off, felt himself no master’ (*CFHJ* XVIII: 133-4). The ‘tone’ of the ‘social art’ of these ‘brilliant strangers’ – Chad’s ‘strange communities’ (*CFHJ* XVIII: 133) – makes Strether feel prejudicially discriminated against. This destabilising quality of tone returns when Strether speaks with Madame de Vionnet about Chad, and this unfamiliar ‘*femme du monde*’ (*CFHJ* XVIII: 170) asks Strether whether Chad discusses her with him. Strether says that

---

<sup>99</sup> For Poirier, the figure of Eugenia brings *The Europeans* far closer to ‘Madame de Vionnet [...] than to the deceptive and mannered people who, in the novels up through *The Portrait of a Lady*, are nearly all villainous’, *Comic*, p. 115.

<sup>100</sup> Berman, p. 64.

<sup>101</sup> Bradbury, ed., *CFHJ*, XVIII, p. xxxiv. For the significance of this analogy between individual and cultural edification for Americans in Europe in the aftermath of civil or national conflict, see James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to “Culture” 1800-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 219.

“he never does that”, reiterating this denial when pressed further (*CFHJ* XVIII: 173):

She considered, and, if the fact was disconcerting to her, effectually concealed it. The next minute indeed she had recovered. “No, he wouldn’t. But do you *need* that?”

Her emphasis was wonderful, and though his eyes had been wandering he looked at her longer now. “I see what you mean.”

“Of course you see what I mean.”

Her triumph was gentle, and she really had tones to make justice weep.

“I’ve before me what he owes you.” (*CFHJ* XVIII: 173)

Madame de Vionnet asks whether Strether needs explicit confirmation that Chad makes her present to him. She masks any potential for Strether’s denial to undermine her authority, as though it were not a subject requiring any discussion, converting ‘never’ into a sign of restraint testifying to the depth of their relationship. The discrimination of “*need*” is thus presented as a superfluous requirement (even if she initially really seemed to want to know). Her triumph consists in making the difference between empathy and coercion difficult to discern, the difference between speaking ‘for’ Strether in the sense of supporting him, and speaking ‘for’ him in the sense of speaking in his place. Within such refinements of emphasis and expression will Strether’s point of view be repeatedly unsettled and even displaced.

Madame de Vionnet “trusts Strether” with regard to her relationship with Chad (the truth of which is not yet fully disclosed); “[i]f I trust you”, she adds, “why can’t you a little trust me too? And why can’t you also,” she asked in another tone, “trust yourself?” (*CFHJ* XVIII: 173). Madame de Vionnet suggests that her trust in Strether should reciprocally demand his in her, and that this will also allow him to trust himself. However, this demand of trust is delicately coercive, placing Strether in a position of dependence. Madame de Vionnet’s suggestion that confidence is a version of self-confidence in others does not suggest a structure of sociality or mutual dependence, but a proliferation of relations which destabilises rather than

confirms commitment. It is notable that, after her series of questions, ‘she gave him no time to reply’ (*CFHJ XVIII*: 173).

Immediately after this exchange, Madame de Vionnet asks Strether whether he has met her daughter, Jeanne. Strether then asks, as a favour of Madame de Vionnet, that she leave Jeanne alone and refrain from asking her how she feels about Chad, ‘the moment when he interposed between this lady and her child’ subsequently recalled by Strether when he finds Madame de Vionnet in a state of ‘prolonged immobility’ in Notre Dame (*CFHJ XVIII*: 190, 185). Madame de Vionnet then asks whether or not she should resist Strether’s enquiries as a favour to him:

“Well – since you ask me.”

“Anything, everything you ask,” she smiled. “I shan’t know them – never. Thank you,” she added with peculiar gentleness as she turned away.

The sound of it lingered with him, making him fairly feel as if he had been tripped up and had a fall. In the very act of arranging with her for his independence he had, under pressure from a particular perception, inconsistently, quite stupidly, committed himself, and, with her subtlety sensitive, on the spot, to an advantage, she had driven in, by a single word, a little golden nail, the sharp intention of which he signally felt. (*CFHJ XVIII*: 174)

Madame de Vionnet’s tone thanks Strether for something that he did not know that he had given. By making his request a favour, he also enters into a relation of indebtedness as well as unintentionally declaring an interest at the very moment he sought to assert his ‘independence’ (*CFHJ XVIII*: 174). He unintentionally commits himself to Madame de Vionnet’s side, compromising any role he may still occupy as a disinterested ambassador. In so doing, Strether performs precisely the kind of trust Madame de Vionnet requests, but without meaning to, as confirmed by the tone with which Madame de Vionnet expresses her gratitude. *The Ambassadors* is just as invested in how tone may create accidental loyalties as in the ways that loyalty may itself constitute a betrayal.

This trick of tone is subsequently alluded to in ‘Chad’s lovely home, one evening ten days later’ (*CFHJ XVIII*: 160) after Strether implores Madame de



Vionnet not to ask her daughter, Jeanne, the way she feels about Chad. Strether says to little Bilham, of Jeanne, that he cannot see “‘how a young fellow of any spirit – such a one as you for instance – can be admitted to the sight of that young lady without being hard hit’” (*CFHJ* XVIII: 174). Strether asks why he does not offer his “‘hand’” and “‘fortune’”, which would give little Bilham a reason for “‘hanging on here’” (*CFHJ* XVIII: 174).

“Why don’t you go in, little Bilham?” He remembered the tone into which he had been betrayed on the garden-bench at the sculptor’s reception, and this might make up for that by being much more the right sort of thing to say to a young man worthy of any advice at all. (*CFHJ* XVIII: 174)

Strether hopes such matchmaking will provide adequate compensation for his previous powerlessness, that ‘this’ tone to little Bilham will ‘make up’ for ‘that’ so unprecedentedly ‘quiet a surrender’ (*CFHJ* XVIII: 134) before the tones which ‘make justice weep’ (*CFHJ* XVIII: 173).<sup>102</sup> This ‘situation’ is subsequently imagined as ‘running away with him’ after this ‘accident’, and is compared with the exchange between Strether and Madame de Vionnet just cited, ‘the moment when he interposed between this lady and her child’ and when her ‘significant “Thank you!” instantly sealed the occasion in her favour’ (*CFHJ* XVIII: 190).

The intonation of this phrase is again described as piercing like a golden nail when Strether agrees to speak to Chad before returning him to Mrs Newsome:

“Thank you!” she said with her hand held out to him across the table and with no less a meaning in the words than her lips had so particularly given them after Chad’s dinner. The golden nail she had then driven in pierced a good inch deeper. (*CFHJ* XVIII: 195-96)

---

<sup>102</sup> James might have come across the phrase ‘making justice weep’ in Bayard Taylor’s verse tragedy, *The Prophet: A Tragedy* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1874), p. 167. For James’s review of Taylor’s *John Godfrey’s Fortunes; Related by Himself; A Story of American Life* (New York: G.P. Putnam; Hurd and Houghton, 1865), see *LCL*, pp. 621-25. The phrase also recalls the ‘fantastic tricks’ played by the ‘proud man’ before heaven that ‘make the angels weep’ in *Measure for Measure* (II. 2. 117-22), see Bradbury, ed., in *CFHJ*, XVIII, pp. 424-25 n.154.

The ‘golden nail’ was often used by James ‘to express both certainty and the pain that accompanies it’, in Jean Chothia’s words,<sup>103</sup> and carries scriptural resonances, alluding as it does to Solomon’s building of the Temple (2 Chronicles 3:9).<sup>104</sup> These tones that are inconceivable to Woollett’s voice of ‘purest veracity’ pin Strether down, committing him to a social obligation, and imply a resemblance to a Christ-like figure to be sacrificed. The metaphor exposes the passivity of Strether’s allegiance, and how often his involuntary emphases of voicing most commit to accidental forms of loyalty and half-conscious dependencies.

When Strether subsequently speaks with Madame de Vionnet, he avows his faith in Chad’s ability to hold his own in the company of the Pococks:

“Oh, he’s excellent. I more and more like,” he insisted, “to see him with them”; though the oddity of this tone between them grew sharper for him even while they spoke. It placed the young man so before them as the result of her interest and the product of her genius, acknowledged so her part in the phenomenon and made the phenomenon so rare, that more than ever yet, he might have been on the very point of asking her for some more detailed account of the whole business than he had yet received from her. The occasion almost forced upon him some question as to how she had managed and to the appearance such miracles presented from her own singularly close standpoint. The moment, in fact, however, passed, giving way to more present history, and he continued simply to mark his appreciation of the happy truth. “It’s a tremendous comfort to feel how one can trust him.” And then again while, for a little, she said

---

<sup>103</sup> Jean Chothia, ed., *The Outcry*, in *CFHJ*, XX (2016), p. 186 n.177. In *The Sense of the Past*, James uses silver nails to mark, metaphorically, the turning points of Ralph Pendrel’s life, ‘a change of attitude, a change of sensibility, as I must call it’ (*SP*: 307, 308, 310, 311, 214), a ‘clou d’argent of the very sharpest salience’ (*SP*: 317). Louis De Coppet, James’s fellow schoolmate, is also credited in *A Small Boy and Others* for having given the ‘most personal, tap to that pointed prefigurement of the manners of “Europe”’, which, inserted wedge-like, if not to say peg-like, into my young allegiance, was to split the tender organ into such unequal halves. His the toy hammer that drove in the point of the golden nail’ (*SBOC*: 32). James had already used the driven wedge as a metaphor for irremovable retention in ‘The Speech of American Women’: the ‘coherency of speech is the narrow end of the wedge they insert into our consciousness: the rest of their appeal comes only *after* that’ (*HJC*: 77).

<sup>104</sup> Chothia, ed., in *CFHJ*, XX, p. 186 n.177; Bradbury, ed., in *CFHJ*, XVIII, p. 425 n.155.

nothing – as if, after all, to *her* trust there might be a special limit: “I mean for making a good show to them.” (CFHJ XVIII: 256)

Strether’s note of discrimination intimates an unwitting truth, rendering Chad a marvel of creation as well as raising the possibility that Madame de Vionnet had a hand in his making, like a rare breed, species or artwork. However, Strether’s statement that it is “tremendous comfort to feel how one can trust him” makes an unintended discrimination: if the emphasis falls on “*him*”, this suggests that there are others not to trust, specifically Madame de Vionnet. Strether provides a necessary clarification, not intending to discriminate a limit to ‘*her* trust’, even though it is precisely such limits with which we are concerned.

She then asks whether Mamie will come with Mrs Pocock, and Strether replies in the affirmative, adding “[b]ut leave it all to Chad!”

The tone of it made him look at her with a kindness that showed his vision of her suspense. But he fell back on his confidence. “Oh well, trust him. Trust him all the way.” He had indeed no sooner so spoken than the queer displacement of his point of view appeared again to come up for him in the very sound, which drew from him a short laugh, immediately checked. (CFHJ XVIII: 261)

The ‘very sound’ here contributes to Strether’s discomfort, and whilst he ‘falls back’ on his confidence, this incurs ‘displacement’ rather than stability, as though his assumed confidence undermined rather than confirmed the surety of the self. Tone again displaces Strether’s ‘point of view’ and moral ‘scheme’, ‘placing’ him in a position he did not expect to occupy.

Finding it difficult to trust someone does not necessarily mean they are untrustworthy, as David Russell has argued:

The rigo[u]r of trust is not only in the task of finding it, but in giving up one’s prior trust in one’s self, in what one is, or thought one was. People have a hard

time trusting, not only because others are unreliable, but because the experience of trust is itself a solvent of fixed identity.<sup>105</sup>

If trust operates as a kind of subjective loosening of strict cultural differences, then Paris does not simply demonstrate the ‘drama of discrimination’ by undermining Woollett’s stable conception of trust through Strether’s struggle to discriminate tone; Paris might require its own kind of trust which he is only just discovering. Such tones constitute a drama insofar as they undermine Strether’s moral scheme, but by discovering rather than disavowing reliance. At the novel’s beginning, when Maria Gostrey says to Strether that she thinks he “trusts” her, he replies in the affirmative, adding that “that’s exactly what I’m afraid of”; whilst this might be the “sort of thing you’re thoroughly familiar with”, “nothing more extraordinary has ever happened to me” (*CFHJ* XVIII: 10). Strether must allow for the rigours of trust without losing his individual freedom, where his autonomy emerges from, rather than in spite of, the fullness of social relatedness. The ability for the reader to follow this drama depends in large part upon their recognition of ‘tone’ and its operation, and this in turn illuminates Strether’s own developing consciousness of tone within the awareness of his own predicament.

## 2.5 The Fullness of Tone

In Paris, ‘[a]ll the voices had grown thicker and meant more things; they crowded on [Strether] as he moved about – it was the way they sounded together that wouldn’t let him be still’ (*CFHJ* XVIII: 318) and are ‘too thick for prompt discrimination’ (*CFHJ* XVIII: 121). When Strether attends a play in London, the ‘stray disyllables’ of his neighbour ‘had for his ear, in the oddest way in the world, so much sound that he wondered they hadn’t more sense’, but which nevertheless provide a ‘consciousness of new contacts’ (*CFHJ* XVIII: 31). However, it is in Paris that the drama of this intonational sensorium challenges discrimination most, eschewing

---

<sup>105</sup> Russell, p. 125.

fixity for fecundity.<sup>106</sup> Strether

attached himself to sounds and suggestions, vibrations of the air, human and dramatic, he imagined, as they were not in other places, that came out for him more and more as the mild afternoons deepened – a far-off hum, a sharp, near click on the asphalt, a voice calling, replying, somewhere and as full of tone as an actor's in a play. (*CFHJ* XVIII: 197)

It is difficult to discern here whether this voice, as 'full of tone as an actor's in a play', is 'calling' or 'replying', or doing both in succession. However, over the course of the novel, Strether's developing auditive intelligence consists in an ability to reconcile discrimination with fullness. When he receives Mrs Newsome's letters, her tone conveys a paradoxical plenitude:

His friend wrote admirably, and her tone was even more in her style than in her voice – it was almost as if, for the hour, he had had to come to this distance to get its full carrying quality; yet the enormity of his consciousness of difference consisted perfectly with the deepened intensity of the connection. It was the difference, the difference of being just where he was and *as* he was that formed the escape – this difference was so much greater than he had dreamed it would be; and what finally he sat there turning over was the strange logic of his finding himself so free. (*CFHJ* XVIII: 50)

Inverting the way that the printed voice is normally understood,<sup>107</sup> Mrs Newsome's tone is more audible in the style of her writing than in her voice. Strether might even have come all the way to Europe get its 'full carrying quality'. But this 'connection' facilitated by the fullness of tone exists alongside Strether's discrimination of his 'difference' from her, as well as from his former preconceptions. Fullness of tone no longer operates in excess of discrimination, as it did with the rigours of trust or the sensorium of Paris. Instead, fullness includes its own recognition of difference. The acoustic amplification of the Atlantic is thus both reverberating and evacuating: '[i]t

---

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> See Griffiths, *Printed*, passim.

filled for him, this tone of hers, all the air; yet it struck him at the same time as the hum of vain things' (*CFHJ* XVIII: 51).<sup>108</sup>

Strether's ability to reconcile discrimination with fullness also occurs much later in the novel. After Sarah Pocock refuses to appreciate Chad's 'hideous' development (*CFHJ* XVIII: 315), Strether visits Chad's apartment in the light of this 'rupture', contemplating that 'all quite *might* be at an end' (*CFHJ* XVIII: 316). Strether hangs over the balcony as little Bilham had done 'the day of his first approach', and as Mamie had done when 'little Bilham himself might have seen her from below', passing, through the rooms 'that occupied the front and that communicated by wide doors' and tries 'to catch again the voice in which they had seemed then to speak to him':

That voice, he had to note, failed audibly to sound; which he took as the proof of all the change in himself. He had heard, of old, only what he *could* then hear; what he could do now was to think of three months ago as a point in the far past. All the voices had grown thicker and meant more things; they crowded on him as he moved about – it was the way they sounded together that wouldn't let him be still. (*CFHJ* XVIII: 318)

These unheard voices 'represented the substance of his loss', not just of Strether's first impression of Chad's apartment, but also of 'the youth of his own that he had long ago missed' (*CFHJ* XVIII: 318). The ability to discriminate the *failure* of the voice to sound, which in turn proves Strether's 'change in himself', depends upon the palpable fullness this lost youth acquires. This is perhaps why the fullness of tone is here a kind of cherished pain, since youth exists more palpably as something lost than something present.<sup>109</sup> This drama of discrimination registers a kind of lost experience that is curiously more real than the actual experience.

---

<sup>108</sup> Strether initially commends Mrs Newsome's "'large, full life'" (*CFHJ* XVIII: 34), but whilst a full life, like a full tone, might suggest a rewarding one, it might imply a lack of room for anything else, an impoverishment rather than excess of experience.

<sup>109</sup> See *WD*, pp. 569-70.

The fullness of tone is a notion that might resonate for a reader cognisant of ‘the fullness of time’ in *Galatians*: ‘the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from the servant’, so that ‘when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law’ (4. 6-7). This is a moment of incarnation, either through a transformation and awakening of the individual after a long period has elapsed, or the hard-won achievement of ends.<sup>110</sup> ‘Fullness of time’ also conveys a sense of completion, a comprehensive or exhaustive coming-to-be of previously unrealised potential. A tone might be full either in the sense of a complete drama, or by embodying the kind of personal and historical fulfilment considered deficient in James’s essays on American culture. Discrimination itself requires this kind of accumulated history, contributing to its privileged status in James’s thinking. For Strether, the fullness of tone also marks a discovery of individuality, a spiritual awakening achieved through the accumulation of experience, ‘the proof of all the change in himself’ (*CFHJ* XVIII: 318), signalling the capacity to retain and respond to experience rather than being overwhelmed by it.

Advocating a fine discriminatory intelligence for the development of a character or culture might risk an artfully disguised and self-ratifying elitism, or else a liberalism naïve of the extent to which discriminations inevitably place others into positions of power or powerlessness, encouraging normative assumptions or naturalised authoritativeness.<sup>111</sup> This is an important challenge to any defence of

---

<sup>110</sup> In *The Tragic Muse*, Miriam tells Nick that her mother believes that in ‘the fullness of time’ she can ‘hold’ Peter in a ‘vise’ (*TM* II: 748). James invoked this sense in a letter to Grace Norton 17 October 1879: ‘[y]our mother’s death makes a care & an anxiety the less – & out of this I hope will come in the fullness of time, some strength, some faculty the more – some source of happiness, or at least some compensation’ (*LHJ* II: 25).

<sup>111</sup> For Kenneth Graham, whilst James’s novels are ‘concerned with the fulfilment and frustration of the individual’, the ‘fullness’ of ‘manners, forms, and relations [...] give the unfulfilled self access to a great power but also to an appalling trap’, *The Drama of Fulfilment: An Approach to the Novels* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. xi, 232. At the end of James’s 1907 ‘Introduction’ to *The Tempest*, fullness not only realises biographical and critical penetration, but also potential betrayal: ‘[m]ay it not then be but a question, for the fullness of time, of the finer weapon, the sharper point, the stronger arm, the more extended lunge?’ (*CWAD2*: 507). The historical achievement signified by the fullness of time signals a potentially injurious as well as incisive motion.

discrimination as a neglected aesthetic or cultural category, perhaps never more so than when, in contemporary usage, ‘discrimination’ suggests ‘prejudice’ or bias as opposed to refined aesthetic acuity. But it ‘is odd’, Christopher Ricks remarks in an interview

that in one sense of the word “discriminate”, discrimination is indiscriminate. The paradox is that when we accuse someone of discrimination we mean that he or she *lacks* discrimination, that they don’t differentiate this person who happens to be French or Italian from another person who is; it’s a kind of lumping-together of people.<sup>112</sup>

‘Discrimination’ demands its own discriminations if it is to be more than ‘a human device which has served its turn and been scrapped’, one of which being that a lack of discrimination is far more disturbing than its excess. For this reason, Dana Ringuette argues that, in ‘The Question of Our Speech’, ‘discrimination’ ‘carries with it the multiplied meanings of being able to make distinctions and see differences and to use good judgment and be discerning’, and thereby develop a ‘critical acumen that would allow women to make penetrating distinctions that go beyond the superficial or the tacit and to acquire a keen practical judgment that recognizes the relations among these distinctions’.<sup>113</sup>

When James calls for “discrimination”, he means the scrutiny of something drawn but not divorced from something else to which it is attached. The term does not entail complete, detached “separation” or disconnection. [...] James’s “discrimination” is a mental action of drawing out for particular attention an element of something that *fully exists* and has *full meaning* in its related state.<sup>114</sup>

This chapter has similarly argued that the discrimination of tone recognises that an

---

<sup>112</sup> ‘An Interview with Sir Christopher Ricks’, *The Literateur* <<http://literateur.com/an-interview-with-sir-christopher-ricks-%E2%80%93-part-i/>> [accessed July 2019].

<sup>113</sup> Dana Ringuette, “‘This Matter of Attention and Discrimination’: Henry James’s Essays on Speech, Manners, and American Women”, *HJR*, 31.2 (2010), 125-41 (128).

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, emphasis added.



utterance only exists fully in its related state, developing the claim in the previous chapter that a single tone might thus convey an entire story or drama by crystallising the relations it gives rise to, and which give rise to it. Discrimination, understood as the capacity to respond to ‘full meaning’, embodies a fragile and profoundly ambivalent mode of personal and cultural development. Drawing on Adorno’s conception of discrimination as a mimetic capacity to experience otherness against its continual rationalisation under ‘secularised Enlightenment’, Ross Posnock argues that Jamesian discrimination is ‘an instrument of individual and cultural replenishment that propagates the “more” – what James calls the “margin” which ‘enlarges possibilities of perception and hence of experience’.<sup>115</sup> Posnock is describing a quality of the eye rather than the ear, but his characterisation of literary representation as a matter of ‘discriminating care’ brings together two desiderata that might not normally be put together, both the kind of solicitude defended in the ‘Introduction’ of this thesis, and the intellectual acuity outlined in this chapter.<sup>116</sup> Discrimination might in this way be the condition of, rather than the obstacle to, love.<sup>117</sup>

Strether’s drama of discrimination thus departs from the kind of fixed representational structure of Woollett that is embodied by Mrs Newsome. Moving beyond the inflexible identity of ambassadorship and its accompanying transactional logic, Strether discovers through the rigours of trust and the fullness of tone an unconstrained subjectivity free from the logic of recompense.<sup>118</sup> This drama of discrimination may depend upon the recognition of what Strether has lost as well as

---

<sup>115</sup> Ross Posnock, *Trial*, pp. 180, 181. See Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. by E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973), p. 42, 45. For Adorno, ‘discrimination alone gets down to the infinitesimal’ which ‘escapes the concept’, p. 45. Cited in Posnock, *Trial*, p. 180.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 149-50.

<sup>117</sup> For Dorothea Krook, *The Tragic Muse* is an example of James’s ‘loving discrimination in respect to the English, the discrimination being always as exact and severe as the love is sincere and tender’, p. 63.

<sup>118</sup> For another version of this argument, see Rivkin, *False Positions*, pp. 80-81. Whilst this thesis also resists a Saussurean understanding of language (as outlined in the ‘Introduction’), this is not because of Rivkin’s post-structuralist approach.

gained, but this also – as in the recognition of ‘the difference of being just where he was and *as* he was’ from the tone of Mrs Newsome’s letters, or the perception of ‘change’ in the audition of voices that failed to sound during his visit to Chad’s apartment – entails a certain freedom or escape that Strether would not otherwise have been capable of imagining.

## Intonations of Immortality

## 3.0 'An Absolutely Abiding Measure'

In *Notes of a Son and Brother*, James is prompted to recall Ralph Waldo Emerson's visits to their family home in New York by the references to his father in Emerson's *Journals*:

The wonder of Boston was above all just then and there for me in the sweetness of the voice and the finish of the speech – this latter through a sort of attenuated emphasis which at the same time made sounds more important, more interesting in themselves, than by any revelation yet vouchsafed us. Was not this my first glimmer of a sense that the human tone *could*, in that independent and original way, be interesting? And didn't it for a long time keep me going, however unwittingly, in that faith, carrying me in fact more or less on to my day of recognising that it took much more than simply not being of New York to produce the music I had listened to. The point was that, however that might be, I had had given me there in the firelight an absolutely abiding measure. If I didn't know from that hour forth quite all it was to *not* utter sounds worth mentioning, I make out that I had at least the opposite knowledge. (*NSBMY*: 165)

This thesis has addressed the ways in which James was to discover what it 'was to *not* utter sounds worth mentioning': an indifference to better or worse ways of speaking, the subservience of the ear to the eye, the slavishly mechanical imitation of tone, and indiscriminate euphony or inarticulate flatness. It has also outlined the extent to which James would deepen and enrich 'the opposite knowledge' through the concept of the auditive intelligence itself and the concepts that support it: the complete drama, the turning point, the touchstone, and a uniquely discriminating

care. Here, the ‘independent and original way’ that ‘tone *could* [...] be interesting’<sup>1</sup> partly arises from the fact that, whilst Emerson’s voice contains the ‘wonder of Boston’, it nevertheless exceeds being simply the result of where he came from (‘it took much more than simply not being of New York to produce the music I had listened to’).<sup>2</sup> This tone is originary as well as original, a foundational moment in James’s own personal development, awakening his sensibility to tone as a subject in and of itself and staying with him throughout his own life as ‘an absolutely abiding measure’, ‘measure’ in a musical sense as well as an enduring standard.

It is hard to know precisely when Emerson’s visit was made; it certainly falls between 1848 and 1855 when the James family lived in 58 West Fourteenth Street before they left for Europe.<sup>3</sup> Because of the presentation of the dates of Emerson’s *Journal* entries James was reading, it would also appear that the occasion took place sometime after April 1850, but before May 1852 (*NSBMY*: 165). This uncertainty over historical circumstances is James’s as well as our own: ‘[d]o I roll several occasions into one, or amplify one beyond reason? – this last being ever, I allow, the waiting pitfall of a chronicler too memory-ridden’ (*NSBMY*: 164). James proceeds to warn himself against such amplification:

But I must not let this carry me beyond the second note of the Diary, this time of May 1852. “I do not wish this or that thing my fortune will procure, I wish the great fortune,” said Henry James [Sr], and said it in the noblest sense.” The

---

<sup>1</sup> This echoes James’s advocacy of the ‘interest of tone’ when questioning his interlocutor in ‘The Manners of American Women’: “[h]aven’t you felt it interesting *in itself*, independently of the scant childish sense or wit?” (*HJC*: 80).

<sup>2</sup> In 1898, James notes the ‘pleasant ring of Boston’ in the ‘tone’ of Colonel Higginson’s *Cheerful Yesterdays* (1898), in *LCI*, pp. 681–88 (p. 687).

<sup>3</sup> In *A Small Boy and Others*, James recalls ‘the great and urbane Emerson’s occasional presence in Fourteenth Street, a centre of many images, where the parental tent was before long to pitch itself and rest awhile’ (*SBOC*: 11).

report has a beauty to me without my quite understanding it; the union of the two voices in it signifies quite enough. (*NSBMY*: 165)<sup>4</sup>

‘Carry’ might signify uncontrollable transportation, but it also sustains, ‘keep[ing] [James] going’ in the faith of its interest, functioning as a kind of unconscious or half-conscious guide. Emerson’s tone achieves this by allowing the recollection of a deeply formative moment in James’s upbringing to persist as well as the singularity of Emerson’s personality to continue (compressively ‘rolling’ Henry James Sr’s tone into itself). Therefore, whilst the tension between compression and extension makes the scene hard to locate historically, this only adds to the epoch-making status of this tone in James’s upbringing.

And yet it *does* matter that Emerson’s tone occurred at a particular time and place. James’s sensitivity to tone may in part have derived from the context of the art of public speaking in Boston, of which Emerson is one instance. As Daniel Karlin recently notes, since Puritan times New England was ‘the home of the sermon as public and political event, and the tradition of public speaking was carried on by political oratory and by the main vehicle of intellectual culture in the first half of the nineteenth century’.<sup>5</sup> In his study of the role of orality in the Early Republic, Christopher Looby suggests that

[s]ince the new United States, by all accounts, manifestly lacked the kind of legitimacy and stability that might be expected of a nation that was grounded in blood loyalty or immemorial facticity – since its legitimacy was explicitly

---

<sup>4</sup> Emerson’s entry is slightly different: “‘I do not wish this or that thing my fortune will procure, I wish the great fortune,” said ↑H.↓ J↑ames↓,<sup>n</sup> & said it in the noble sense’, *Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1820-1872*, ed. by Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes, 10 vols (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1912), VIII, p. 280. For Henry James and James Sr’s relation to Emerson, see William T. Stafford, ‘Emerson and the James Family’, *American Literature*, 24 (1953), 433-61.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Karlin, ed., ‘Introduction’ to *The Bostonians*, in *CFHJ*, VIII (2015), pp. xxvii-civ (p. lvi). The novel describes how ‘[p]ublic speaking had been a Greenstreet tradition’, referring to Abraham Greenstreet, Mrs Tarrant’s father, a leading Abolitionist, the only very ‘definite criticism’ to be made of whom is that ‘he didn’t know how to speak’ (*B*: 66).

grounded in an appeal to rational interest, not visceral passion – *voice* embodied a certain legitimating charisma that print could not.<sup>6</sup>

The political force of Abolitionism was driven by public lectures, notably those of Frederick Douglass, whilst movements such as Spiritualism also relied on the legitimating charisma of ‘inspirational speakers’ to draw their audiences and charge their fees.<sup>7</sup> Douglass and Emerson also considered themselves divinely inspired; an orator, Douglass’s *Journal* entry for 6 January 1854 claims, should feel himself ‘supported by the Almighty, and by all the powers of the universe [... ] There must [also] be harmony between the speaker and the thing spoken, or there is no power, point or significance in the address’.<sup>8</sup> But in his review of James Elliot Cabot’s *A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1887), James notes that ‘life had never bribed [Emerson] to look at anything but the soul’ because ‘at that time’ ‘bribes and lures’ outside the soul were ‘few’.<sup>9</sup> Emerson’s insistence upon self-reliance ‘in New England at that time’ was thus ‘sure of success, of listeners and sympathy’ (*LCI*: 255). There is an audible skepticism in James’s praise here, as though Emerson’s success arose as much from the simplicity of New England culture as his ideas themselves. Nevertheless, ‘the way in which Emerson did it added to the charm – by word of mouth, face to face, with a rare, irresistible voice’, and his ‘divine persuasiveness’ (*LCI*: 255).

The idea that Emerson’s tone was irresistible, in spite of the arguments themselves, recalls the following passage in *Hawthorne* (1879):

One certainly envies the privilege of having heard the finest of Emerson’s orations poured forth in their early newness. They were the most poetical, the

---

<sup>6</sup> Christopher Looby, *Voicing America: Language, Literary Form, and the Origins of the United States* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Karlin, ed., *CFHJ*, VIII, p. lvi.

<sup>8</sup> Cited in *The Frederick Douglass Papers: Volume 1, Series One: Speeches, Debates and Interviews, 1841-1846*, ed. by John W. Blassingame and John R. McKivigan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. xxiv.

<sup>9</sup> Reprinted under the title ‘Emerson’ in *Partial Portraits* (1888), in *LCI*, pp. 250-71 (p. 255).

most beautiful productions of the American mind, and they were thoroughly local and national. They had a music and a magic, and when one remembers the remarkable charm of the speaker, the beautiful modulation of his utterance, once regrets in especial that one might not have been present on a certain occasion which made a sensation, an era – the delivery of an address to the Divinity School of Harvard University, on a summer evening in 1838.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the ‘faulty parts in the Emersonian philosophy [...] the general tone was magnificent’, and this effect cannot be separated from ‘coming when it did and where it did’ (*LCI*: 383). Whilst Emerson’s voice would ultimately challenge the specificity of historical record, the ‘wonder of Boston’ is nevertheless conditioned by the circumstances of its utterance.

James’s envy might have been partly directed at his father here, who had struggled to reconcile the ‘magic’ of Emerson’s public speaking with his ideas.<sup>11</sup> But the occasion of the ‘Divinity School Address’ was not the only occasion James regretted failing to hear Emerson’s tone. In his brother’s ‘Address at the Centenary of Ralph Waldo Emerson, May 25, 1903’,<sup>12</sup> he longed to hear how William James’s ‘accents’ would have sounded in their ‘overt dedication of dear old E. to his immortality’ (*HJWJL*: 429). Evoking the passage from *Notes of a Son and Brother* with which this chapter began, William’s ‘Address’ also describes the power of tone:

The pathos of death is this, that when the days of one’s life are ended, those days that were so crowded with business and felt so heavy in their passing, what remains of one in memory should usually be so slight a thing. The phantom of an attitude, the echo of a certain mode of thought, a few pages of print, some invention, or some victory we gained in a brief crucial hour, are all that can survive the best of us. It is as if the whole of a man’s significance had now shrunk into the phantom of an attitude, into a mere musical note or phrase, suggestive of his singularity – happy are those whose singularity gives a note

---

<sup>10</sup> Hawthorne, in *LCI*, pp. 315-457 (p. 383-84).

<sup>11</sup> ‘[W]hat [Emerson] mainly held to be true I could not help regarding as false, and what he mainly held to be false I mainly regarded as true. [...] what the magic actually was, I could not at all divine, save that it was intensely personal’, Henry James Sr., ‘Emerson’, *The Atlantic* (December 1904), cited in Karlin, ed., in *CFHJ*, VIII, p. lviii n.65.

<sup>12</sup> *W2*, pp. 1119-25.

so clear as to be victorious over the inevitable pity of such a diminution and abridgment. (*W2*: 1119)

The ‘inevitable pity of such a diminution and abridgement’ is echoed by Henry’s anxiety: ‘[d]o I roll several occasions into one, or amplify one beyond reason?’ However, William articulates a paradox implicit in the ‘absolutely abiding measure’, one which helps to avoid ‘the waiting pitfall of a chronicler too memory-ridden’ (*NSBMY*: 164); the pathos of abbreviation and augmentation reinforces rather than undermines the singularity of Emerson’s life because in order to survive posthumous distortion, his ‘note’ must be ‘clear’ indeed if it is to be ‘victorious’. Diminution has the effect of rendering his character and tone more, rather than less, singular, so that the ‘phantom of an attitude’ is ‘certain to be quoted and extracted more and more as time goes on’ (*W2*: 1119). The most fleeting aspects of Emerson’s life, a mere echo or musical phrase, may therefore persist beyond his passing.

James’s commemorative address, ‘Browning in Westminster Abbey’, first published in *The Speaker* (4 January 1890), and then reprinted in *Essays in London and Elsewhere* (1893), also suggests that death facilitates a unique relation to the voice:

We possess a great man most when we begin to look at him through the glass plate of death [...] the Abbey never strikes us so benignantly as when we have a valued voice to commit to silence there.<sup>13</sup>

This commitment to silence, however, seems to increase rather than diminish Browning’s audibility: his ‘voice sounds loudest, and also clearest, for the things that, as a race, we like best’ (*LCI*: 790), contributing to the ‘high standard of distinction, of immortality, as it were’ in Westminster Abbey (*LCI*: 787). James’s own intonation is also partly responsible for this continued life, as recalled by the journalist Filson Young in *The Pall Mall Gazette*:

---

<sup>13</sup> Henry James, ‘Browning in Westminster Abbey’, in *LCI*, pp. 786-91 (p. 787).



[James's address] reminded us that our literature is indeed a living thing; that the great dead do not die, but live on and develop in the minds of those who follow them. The rich, mosaic beauty of this utterance is in nowise to be reported, described or analysed; only to be remembered and treasured by those who heard it.<sup>14</sup>

Young begins by describing how James's tone contributes to Browning's afterlife, but by the end of the passage it sounds as if Browning's death also enabled James's 'mellow old voice' to be 'remembered and treasured', as well as Browning's.<sup>15</sup> Young subsequently describes how 'one merely listened to the voice of this charming old artist' in *The Saturday Review*, and how James's 'mellow voice, a little weary now, had dropped to its final cadence'.<sup>16</sup> However, this description of James's agedness provoked Lucy Clifford's complaint (no longer extant), for which he thanked her 'impulse to steep me, and hold me down under water, in the Fountain of Youth' (*LHJ* II: 243).<sup>17</sup> James suggests he has taken Young's "'Invidious Epithet'" (that he was 'old') in *The Saturday Review* as something 'mainly applied to my voice', rather than his actual person (he was sixty-nine), and proceeds to describe how his voice reflects his flexible sense of his own age: '[m]y voice *was* on that Centenary itself Centenarian – for reasons that couldn't be helped – for I really that day wasn't fit to speak' (*LHJ* II: 243). For James, 'antiquity' 'goes and comes; at times isn't there at all and at others is quite sufficient', whilst at the same time it is paradoxically more 'rejuvenat[ing]' than the mere '*pretension* to youth' (*LHJ* II: 243). This sense of youth as a comparative state accords with the refusal of the strict opposition between youth and old age in the opening of *The Middle Years*, where youth is something that might continue even at the end of James's life (*NSBMY*: 409-

---

<sup>14</sup> Filson Young, 'The Things that Matter', *The Pall Mall Gazette* (May 8 1912), 5.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Filson Young, "Browning and Henry James", *The Saturday Review* (May 11 1912), 584.

<sup>17</sup> I am grateful for Oliver Herford's article 'Commencement or Commemoration', *Literary Imagination*, 15 (2013), 20-34, for drawing my attention to Young's articles and James's response to Clifford.

10). The occasion of Browning's death thus not only confirmed the potential for the voice to become more clearly audible after death, a notion in which James's own voice participated, but also includes the kind of flexible chronology central to James's sense of life after death more generally.

\*

Critics have for a long time been conscious of James's interest in the question of the survival of the self after death, whether in terms of the ghostly and supernatural,<sup>18</sup> the avoidance of the past in definite form,<sup>19</sup> or the influence and play of allusion: 'latent poetry – old echoes, ever so faint, that *would* come back' (*AS*: 28).<sup>20</sup> Kevin Ohi provides an ingenious turn to this body of scholarship by suggesting that, because in late James consciousness rarely coincides with itself, experience is constitutively 'belated' and life is always already in one sense an afterlife.<sup>21</sup> If, as Robert Douglas-Fairhurst contends, 'so many of our lines of thought about human survival extend, or deflect, or cross nineteenth-century lines of thought',<sup>22</sup> then to judge by much recent criticism, James would seem to be a central figure for assessing this claim.

Nevertheless, 'immortality' risks being too grandiose a term for a writer so acutely aware of time and its annihilating force, something to be survived or resisted as often as heroically transcended. The 'Preface' to *The Princess Casamassima* shirks from the potential complacency of 'immortality', and James hopes to avoid making his characters 'too *interpretative* of the muddle of fate' so that they resemble 'the superior nature of the all-knowing immortals whose annals are dreadfully dull so long as flurried humans are not, for the positive relief of bored Olympians, mixed up

---

<sup>18</sup> T.J. Lustig, *Henry James and the Ghostly* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 40-43, 165-78.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Rawlings, *Henry James and the Abuse of the Past* (London: Palgrave, 2005), p. 79. See also pp. 124-58.

<sup>20</sup> See Herford, *Retrospect*, p. 134.

<sup>21</sup> Kevin Ohi, *Queerness*, pp. 149-70.

<sup>22</sup> Douglas-Fairhurst, p. 346.

with them' (LC2: 1090). Tennyson's 'Tithonus' (1860), a poem greatly admired by James,<sup>23</sup> also reminds us of the potential naivety of the desire for never ending life; immortality may be an intolerable burden and even a fate worse than death.

James's own explicit treatment of the subject, 'Is There A Life After Death?', is sensitive to 'flurried' humanity through its tentative pronouncements which avoid conclusive assertion. Writing to Elizabeth Jordan, the editor of *Harper's Bazaar*, the magazine that had originally commissioned the piece, James confessed to finding 'the little business distinctly difficult, so that I had – it being a sort of thing that is so little in my "chords", to work it out with even more deliberation than I had allowed time for'.<sup>24</sup> The essays would be collected in a volume, *In After Days: Thoughts on the Future Life* (1910), that included contributions from William Dean Howells, John Bigelow, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Julia Ward Howe and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps. Despite the broad range of approaches the contributors adopt, ranging from the perspective of science to personal consolation (*IADFL*: 16), the essays do not depart from 'religious certainty' entirely (William Thomson and John Bigelow tackle Christianity and the doctrine of resurrection directly), and this makes the absence of religion in James's contribution all the more conspicuous. Hazel Hutchison and Edwin Sill Fussell are amongst the few critics who place James's interest in the afterlife within a theological context,<sup>25</sup> one which extends to include his father as well as his brother.<sup>26</sup> Yet Hutchison notes that 'James contributes no polemical or philosophical essays to this very public debate, offers no

---

<sup>23</sup> James cites the last stanza in his review of 'Mr Tennyson's Drama', praising its 'magic' and 'purity of tone' (*CWAD2*: 84).

<sup>24</sup> Leon Edel and Lyall H. Powers, eds., 'Henry James and the Bazar Letters', in *Howells and James: A Double Billing* (New York: New York Public Library, 1958), pp. 27–55 (p. 54). Jordan commissioned the essays, but the editing of the book is attributed to Howells, who writes the introductory essay. See Dana J. Ringuette, 'Imagining the End: Henry James, Charles Sanders Peirce, and the "Reach Beyond the Laboratory Brain"', *HJR*, 20.2 (1999), 155–65 (155).

<sup>25</sup> Hazel Hutchison, *Seeing and Believing: Henry James and the Spiritual World* (New York: Macmillan, 2006), p. 128; Edwin Sill Fussell, *The Catholic Side of Henry James* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>26</sup> Taylor, pp. 24–60.

discussion of the virtues of belief, and avoids recounting any personal spiritual experience or the lack of it'; such 'critical silence' renders the essay both fascinating and frustrating.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, for Fussell, the essay 'may remind us what an idle exercise it usually is to attempt fixing on Henry James the theological or philosophical modes of discourse in which his father and brother gamboled and that he was always bent on avoiding',<sup>28</sup> and so exemplifies that 'somewhat evasive and shifting line which divides human affairs into the profane and the sacred'.<sup>29</sup> Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, however, positions the essay within a more accommodating temporal framework: the 'question mark which follows "Is There A Life After Death?"', he notes, 'is one which casts its long shadow back over the Victorian age, and forward into our own age' and 'continues to provide models for our doubts over whether this is the right question to ask, or whether we are asking it in the right way'.<sup>30</sup>

James's 'father and brother' may have been more practiced at this genre of writing,<sup>31</sup> but even William confesses, in 'Human Immortality' (1898), first delivered as a lecture at Harvard, that 'my own personal feeling about immortality has never been of the keenest order, and that, among the problems that give my mind solicitude, this one does not take the very foremost place' (*WI*: 1101). Part of this hesitation derives from the enormity of his subject; as William observes: '[a]t the back of Mr Alger's *Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life*, there is a bibliography of more than five thousand titles of books in which it is treated' (*WI*:

---

<sup>27</sup> Hutchison, *Seeing*, p. 128.

<sup>28</sup> Fussell, p. 51.

<sup>29</sup> This adapts James's 1887 essay on Constance Fenimore Woolson, reprinted in *Partial Portraits* (1888), and whose death was itself deeply formative for James, *LCI*, pp. 639-49 (p. 640). See Hutchison, *Seeing*, pp. 118-20.

<sup>30</sup> Douglas-Fairhurst, p. 345.

<sup>31</sup> Henry James Sr., 'On Consciousness and Immortality', in *The James Family: Including Selections from the Writings of Henry James Senior, William, Henry & Alice James*, ed. by F. O. Matthiessen (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1947), pp. 587-616. James alludes to 'one or two' of the aspects of the fictitious Catharine Barber 'in the fragment of a "spiritual autobiography," the reminiscences of a so-called Stephen Dewhurst printed by W.J. (1885) in *The Literary Remains of Henry James*' (*SBOC*: 8).

1101).<sup>32</sup> But just because something is well known does not mean it is known well, and William's comment raises the more alarming possibility that the quantity of writing on the subject of the afterlife might confirm rather than challenge the constitutive opacity of the field. The sceptical caution surrounding accounts of the afterlife in the nineteenth century was exacerbated by the influence of evolutionary theory, which was for many responsible for the death of immortality.<sup>33</sup> As William writes, it demands that we 'suppose a far vaster scale of times, spaces, and numbers than our forefathers ever dreamed the cosmic process to involve' (*WI*: 1122). If William's confidence balks before the sheer number of works dealing with the subject of life after death, it is also checked by the 'incredible and intolerable number of beings which, with our modern imagination, we must believe to be immortal, if immortality be true' (*WI*: 1121).

When we write about immortality, it is therefore worth wondering what we are writing about. When William states that '[i]mmortality is one of the great spiritual needs of man' (*WI*: 1100), this might not suggest that we should all think harder about a topic that has evaded us, as though we might finally discover the truth. Rather, it implies that we should recognise how the notion of an afterlife might be just as sustaining as its possibility. William is far more concerned with what immortality might tell us about the conditions in which the question is considered necessary to ask than any actual answer to the question of immortality itself, denying the subject's inadmissibility rather than seeking its incontrovertible proof. The variety of approaches to the afterlife in the nineteenth century might not render all engagement with the subject of the future life irrevocably compromised, but instead indicate how the topic encourages a creative engagement with 'change, continuity, and continuity-through-change which were actively embodied in their own methods of composition' rather than a 'chaos of possibility'.<sup>34</sup> The conceptual obstacles posed

---

<sup>32</sup> William Rousnesville Alger, *A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life with a Complete Bibliography of the Subject* (Philadelphia: George W. Childs, 1864).

<sup>33</sup> See Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 9, 171.

<sup>34</sup> Douglas-Fairhurst, p. 6.

by immortality are thus not elements to be clarified away, but must represent essential features of the subject itself, as suggested by the tentative reach into futurity with which Henry's essay concludes: '[n]o, no, no – I reach beyond the laboratory-brain' ('IAD': 233).

Given all the reasons *not* to address the subject of life after death, however, it is perhaps unsurprising that William and Henry refrained from articulating their thoughts on the subject for so long. Henry suggests that for many years the question of life after death did not much appeal to him just as it rarely appeals to the 'young': he was 'content for a long time to let it alone, only asking that it should, in turn, as irrelevant and insoluble, let *me*' ('IAD': 217). Hazel Hutchison suggests that most of the writers commissioned to contribute to *In After Days* were selected *because* of their age (most of whom were in their sixties and older): Howe, Higginson, Bigelow and Phelps had all died the following year,<sup>35</sup> and William would also die soon after the publication of his brother's essay. In 1904, William was presented with a questionnaire on the subject of religion, circulated by his former student, James Pratt. To one of the questions, he responds as follows:

8. Do you believe in personal immortality? *Never keenly; but more strongly as I grow older. If so, why? Because I am just getting fit to live.*<sup>36</sup>

Paradoxically, William overcomes his indifference to immortality as he ages, but because of the renewed significance of life rather than the increased proximity to death, reversing the way we might typically expect this question to be answered. Henry similarly argues that a life after death is inconceivable if one has not had a life before it, and consequently, recognition of the former never arises if one has an impoverished sense of the latter ('IAD': 201).

If immortality is so difficult to discuss or even articulate, it might seem wilfully perverse to discuss it in relation to intonation, amongst the most fleeting

---

<sup>35</sup> Hutchison, *Seeing*, p. 128.

<sup>36</sup> William James, 'Answers to a Questionnaire', in *W2*, pp. 1183-85 (p. 1185).

aspects of expression. For ‘tone’ to be capable of preserving a life is deeply paradoxical, not least when it depends upon a heritage and community of care in order to preserve and sustain it. How might tone operate in the opposite way, itself capable of preserving a speaker or even speakers beyond their death? One way of reconciling intonation with immortality is suggested by Eric Griffiths: the printed voice allows tone to become the object of our ‘returning attention’ that is not possible in normal conversation.<sup>37</sup> For Browning, this compulsion to preserve the fleeting often creates a ‘distorting seizure of the real’, such as the ‘drama[s] of jealous possessiveness’ animating poems such as ‘Mesmerism’ or ‘My Last Duchess’.<sup>38</sup> John Wilkinson has similarly characterised a quality of ‘repeatable evanescence’ as essential to lyric poetry in general, which has the ‘paradoxical effect of reconciling a reader to contingency, to the evanescent, time and again’.<sup>39</sup> Yet in James’s account of Emerson’s tone the evanescence of the *spoken* voice also reinforces rather than undermines the singularity of the self. The ‘of’ in the title of this chapter is thus not intended to smooth out the paradoxical, equivocal and often intensely resistant nature of James’s thinking about the relation between tone and life after death. Rather than being the least appropriate way of understanding the question of life after death, tone might in fact be the best way of addressing a subject that James could only ever observe obliquely.

What follows falls into three parts. The first registers James’s ambivalence to the notion of immortality by showing how time was something to be ‘resisted’ at the level of intonation, rather than heroically transcended. Nevertheless, resistance also suggests an enlivening durability, one which overcomes any conception of style or subjectivity as inert or passive. The second section argues that Frances Anne Kemble, the great actor and writer, as well as James’s friend and intimate, possessed a tone that preserved a world James could not have otherwise accessed, suggesting a

---

<sup>37</sup> Griffiths, *Printed*, pp. 203, 204.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 204.

<sup>39</sup> John Wilkinson, *Lyric in its Times: Temporalities in Verse Breath and Stone* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. 16-17.

relationship with the past resembling an ongoing conversation rather than a fixed historical record. The chapter concludes by considering the tension between termination and continuation in scenes of parting and leave-taking in *The Golden Bowl*, where the prosodic texture of articulation is especially foregrounded.

### 3.1 Irresistible Resistances

On the 1 May 1893, James wrote to Edmund Gosse upon re-reading ‘more or less’ Pierre Loti’s novel *Matelot* (1893), a story which, as James’s subsequent ‘Introduction’ to Loti’s *Impressions* (1898) summarises, ‘depicts the career of a small sensitive sailor-boy who feels everything really too much’ and who ‘dies, of course, in sight of home, of a fever contracted in torrid eastern seas’.<sup>40</sup> However, it was not the plot that compelled James to read it again, but its rhythm:

I have read *Matelot* more or less over again; for the extreme penury of the *idea* in Loti, and the almost puerile thinness of this particular *donnée*, wean me not a jot from the irresistible charm the rascal’s very limitations have for me. I drink him down as he *is* —like a philtre or a *baiser*, and the coloration of his *moindre mots* has a peculiar magic for me. Read *aloud* to yourself the passage ending section XXXV—the upper part of page 165, and perhaps you will find in it something of the same strange *eloquence* of suggestion and rhythm as I do: which is what literature gives when it is most exquisite and which constitutes its sovereign value and its resistance to devouring time. And yet what *niaiserie*! (*LHJ*: 208)

Loti’s passage was of immense importance for James’s thinking, and he wrote about this ‘episode of the young man’s innocent friendship, blighted by fate, with the mild Madeleine of Quebec’ (*LC2*: 514), on no fewer than three separate occasions throughout the 1890’s: first in his *Notebooks* on 8 April 1893, in Paris (*CN*: 76), then over a month later in the Gosse letter, and finally in his ‘Introduction’ to Loti’s *Impressions* (1898), a work which itself describes rhythm’s mysterious ability to

---

<sup>40</sup> *LC2*, pp. 505-20 (p. 513).



preserve culture through its temporal resistance.<sup>41</sup> However, the letter to Gosse is the only place where the rhythm revealed by reading ‘*aloud*’ is described as a means of resisting time. One might more readily expect verse, rather than prose, to contribute to such an effect, but James’s allusion to Shakespeare’s sonnet on ‘devouring time’ (‘Devouring time, blunt thou the lion’s paws’),<sup>42</sup> itself reworking the Ovidian apostrophe, ‘O Time, thou great devourer’ (‘*tempus edax rerum*’) (*Metamorphosis* XV. 234),<sup>43</sup> subtly transforms a claim that verse makes love ‘live ever young’ into a statement about prose style. This claim might appear to be tempered by the self-confessedly speculative caveats: ‘perhaps’ Gosse will find ‘something’ of this same quality ‘as I do’. Yet closer attention to James’s syntax reveals a more exacting claim: ‘eloquence’ not only pre-modifies ‘suggestion’, but ‘rhythm’ too. Whilst ‘eloquence’ may be easily understandable as an uncontentious attribute of ‘suggestion’, this could less confidently be asserted of ‘rhythm’. These resistances are ‘of’, rather than ‘in’, rhythm, a mysterious expressivity only partially accessible to words alone and, above all, best perceived through intonation, through the act of Gosse reading the passage ‘*aloud*’, the italics almost inviting a voicing of the instruction itself.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, narrative deficiency does not stop James drinking Loti ‘down as he is’ but makes the resistances of rhythm more, rather than less, irresistible.

---

<sup>41</sup> ‘[T]he indefinable nature of this music, in the mystery of its rhythm, the peculiar genius of the race will be preserved for centuries still to come’, Pierre Loti, *Impressions*, introduced by Henry James (London: Westminster, Constable and Co., 1898), p. 89. James’s ‘Introduction’ echoes the terms of the Gosse letter: the ‘good Lotist, as I may say, can only swallow *Matelot* whole [...] the thing is irresistible’; the ‘tone is exquisite’ and ‘lie[s] beyond my analysis’ in the ‘very air of the picture – of which a particular breath, for instance, is in the eloquence’ (LC2: 514-5).

<sup>42</sup> William Shakespeare, ‘Sonnet 63’, in *The Complete Sonnets and Poems*, ed. by Colin Burrow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1916; repr. 1958), p. 507.

<sup>43</sup> *Metamorphosis: Books IX-XV*, trans. by Frank Justus Miller, 2 vols (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1912; repr. 1968), II, p. 380 (Latin), p. 381 (English).

<sup>44</sup> As with James’s advocacy of the ‘direct reading out’ in *The Golden Bowl* ‘Preface’ (LC2: 1339).

If one takes Henry James at his word, turning to ‘the upper part of page 165’ of Loti’s *Matelot*, it is possible to see how this prose might reward the ‘direct reading out’ and survive time’s rapacious appetite:

Donc, ils en venaient à s’aimer d’une également pure tendresse, tous les deux. Elle, ignorante des choses d’amour et lisant chaque soir sa bible; elle, destinée à rester inutilement fraîche et jeune encore pendant quelques printemps pâles comme celui-ci, puis à vieillir et se faner dans l’enserrement monotone de ces mêmes rues et de ces mêmes murs. Lui, gâté déjà par les baisers et les étreintes, ayant le monde pour habitation changeante, appelé à partir, peut-être demain, pour ne revenir jamais et laisser son corps aux mers lointaines...<sup>45</sup>

The passage establishes a balance between its two subjects, a balance between ‘elle’ and ‘lui’, between the fate of ‘the mild Madeleine of Quebec’, bound by the land, and Jean Berny, *Matelot*, bound by the sea. Poised equanimity is also registered in the pause after ‘et’ that falls between the two halves of the parallel phrase ‘ignorante des choses d’amour et lisant chaque soir sa bible’. The dense auditory texture is further intensified by the intercalated echo of ‘ignorante’ and ‘lisant’, and the auditory richness continues with the repetition of ‘elle’, the constellation of similar sounds (‘destinée à rester’), conspicuous plosives (‘pendant quelques printemps pâles’), and sibilance of ‘celui-ci’. The admiration of James’s friend Robert Louis Stevenson’s for the ‘satisfying equipoise of sound’ in 1885 applies here: ‘for nothing more often disappoints the ear than a sentence solemnly and sonorously prepared, and hastily and weakly finished’.<sup>46</sup>

This intense melodic patterning continues in the final sentence: the elision in the phrase ‘les baisers et les étreintes’ echoes with ‘baisers’ and ‘les é’ (‘baisier’ is also the word James uses in the Gosse letter). But unlike the previous sentence, the clauses now shorten, and the third sentence contracts, eschewing the ‘equipoise of

---

<sup>45</sup> Pierre Loti, *Matelot* (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1893), pp. 164-65.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, ‘On Style in Literature: Its Technical Elements’, in *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson*, 10 vols (New York: Bigelow, Smith and Co., 1906), IX: *The Essays of Robert Louis Stevenson*, pp. 267-84 (p. 270).

sound'. Balance is constituted by separation only: as Madeleine moves into the constraints of 'de ces mêmes rues et de ces mêmes murs', the sailor-boy emerges from them. 'Étreintes' does not just mean an embrace or a hug, but also has that sense of being grasped, recalling even as it is distinguished from 'l'enserrement', and which James's translation of the same passage in his 'Introduction' renders as 'other arms' (LC2: 514). The embrace he receives from others thus mirrors the encircling immurement in which her youth fades: 'she, destined to keep her useless freshness and youth for a few more springtimes not less pale and then to grow old and fade in the narrowing round of these same streets and these same walls' (LC2: 514); he, 'already spoiled with kisses and with other arms', destined to be 'called to start off perhaps to-morrow, never again to come back – only to leave his body in distant seas' (LC2: 514). Both are to be kept apart in a passage whose balanced cadences evoke its protagonists' separation more powerfully than words alone, an eloquence that lies in patterns of sound whereby certain experiences, the correspondence of intimacy and distance, love and its denial, are understood through rhythms that are as beautiful as they are devastating, rhythms that transform balance into constraint. Paradoxically, the very thing that James admired in this passage, the resistance to devouring time through the eloquence of rhythm and suggestion, now enters into a productive conflict with the sense of the passage itself, where the desire to resist devouring time coincides with its impossibility.

We might just be able to trace James's interest in the rhythmic resistances of style capable of ensuring art's lasting durability back to the final lines of Théophile Gautier's 'L'Art.', a response to Théodore de Banville's 'Odelette' and collected in *Émaux et Camées* (1852), cited by James its entirety to represent the poet 'at his best' in his 1873 review of Gautier:<sup>47</sup>

Sculpte, lime, cisèle;  
Que ton rêve flottant

---

<sup>47</sup> Review of *Théâtre de Théophile Gautier: Mystères, Comédies, et Ballets*, reprinted as 'Théophile Gautier', in *French Poets and Novelists*, pp. 39-71, in LC2, pp. 355-75 (p. 359).

Se scelle  
Dans le bloc résistant.

(LC2: 361)

‘[R]ésistant’ is not only the last word of the poem but of the whole collection, gaining an emphatic weight which reinforces the poem’s suggestion that resistance is an aesthetic achievement, a result to which art aspires. The poem directs the sculptor not to model in clay which yields to the hand despite the listless heart, and instead to carve in stone whose resistances are more felicitously intractable:

Oui, l’œuvre sont plus belle  
D’une forme au travail  
Rebelle,  
Vers, marbre, oynx, émail.

(LC2: 359)

The greater the resistance, the more beautiful the artwork. The ‘bloc résistant’ is in many respects an emblem of aestheticism, which critics have often noted promotes the ideal of resistance at the level of style.<sup>48</sup> Gautier rejects the ‘rythme commode’ that would indiscriminately take any metrical ‘foot’ without any resistance of the prosodic medium: ‘[d]u mode / Que tout pied quitte et prend!’ (LC2: 360). This provides an exception to James’s more general ambivalence about aestheticism’s

---

<sup>48</sup> Linda Dowling notes the significance of the ‘resistant nature of the linguistic medium’ in Gautier (as well as Rossetti and Pater), *Language and Decadence in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 116. For Aatos Ojala there was a ‘vivid consciousness of language as a concrete resistant material’ for ‘exponents of aestheticism’, *Aestheticism and Oscar Wilde*, 2 vols (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemia Toimituksia, 1955), II, p. 17.

tendency to separate art from morality:<sup>49</sup> Gautier's 'aesthetic' and 'almost technical conviction' was almost 'glowing with a kind of moral fervour' (LC2: 361).<sup>50</sup>

It is not until his 'Preface' (1909) to *The Golden Bowl* that James would revisit the relation between resistance and the voice. Just after describing how he rigorously tested his revised sentences by the 'the attention articulately *sounded*' (LC2: 1339), James adds that

Flaubert has somewhere in this connexion an excellent word – to the effect that any imaged prose that fails to be richly rewarding in return for a competent utterance ranks itself as wrong through not being "in the conditions of life." (LC2: 1339)

We might be excused for thinking that this 'word' alludes to Flaubert's '*gueuloir*': the process of reading sentences in a loud voice or yell in order to eliminate melodic

---

<sup>49</sup> James subsequently complains of the 'crudity of sentiment of the advocates of "art for art"' in his review of 'Charles Baudelaire', reprinted in *French Poets and Novelists*, pp. 72-73, in LC2, pp. 152-58 (p. 157). He admires the 'chiselled' quality of Gautier's prose (LC2: 359, 380), despite complaining, when writing on Charles de Mazade in 1875, how, in French literature during Napoleon III's era, '[e]verything ran to form, and the successful books were apt to resemble little vases, skilfully moulded and chiselled, into which unclean things have been dropped', in LC2, pp. 555-56 (p. 556). He also is 'careful to traverse the insinuation' that Robert Louis Stevenson 'is primarily a chiseller of prose' in his 1888 essay on the writer and friend, in LCI, pp. 1231-55 (p. 1239). Ojala notes aestheticism's tendency to view language as 'a concrete resisting material', hence 'great pains were taken to "chisel" it as elaborately as possible', *Aestheticism*, p. 15.

<sup>50</sup> For Michael Levenson, aestheticism was itself 'both a lure and a scene of resistance for James, who embraced an independent value for art but only within conditions of *professionalism* – art as a self-legitimizing activity that depends on the most rigorous sense of technique and the most austere sense of vocation', 'Fin-de-siècle London (1890-1900)', in *Henry James in Context*, ed. by David McWhirter, pp. 37-46 (p. 43). For the location of resistance within the technical elements of artistic form in subsequent philosophical aesthetics, see Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 18. This significantly revises Kant's understanding of resistance as limited to a particular moment of the dynamical sublime, describing the oscillation between the passivity in the face of nature's might and the activity of reason's subsequent domination over it. Without this resistance, the sublime would only evoke fear. See Howard Caygill, *Art of Judgement* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p. 346. For challenges to Adorno's account of resistance, see Frances Ferguson, *Solitude and the Sublime: Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation* (New York: Routledge 1992), p. 68.

repetition. However, ‘word’ here implies the French sense of an ‘explanation’ or ‘key’, as when the enigma of Strether’s outlook is described as the ‘word of the whole enigma’ (*CFHJ* XVIII: 301), echoing the French phrase ‘*le mot de l’énigme*’.<sup>51</sup> This is confirmed when the phrase is heard as an allusion to Flaubert’s ‘Preface’ to Louis Bouilhet’s *Dernières chansons* (1880):

Il s’enivrait du rythme des vers et de la cadence de la prose qui doit, comme eux, pouvoir être lue tout haut. Les phrases mal écrites ne résistent pas à cette épreuve; elles oppressent la poitrine, gênent les battements du cœur, et se trouvent ainsi en dehors des conditions de la vie.<sup>52</sup>

For Flaubert, a misplaced stress constricts the chest and makes breathing impossible. A bad sentence offers no resistance at all in this vocal tribunal or ‘court of appeal’; it would also induce premature death. The better prose’s cadences can stand trial, the better they can stand up to this kind of testing in both a prosodic (‘la cadence de la prose’) and cardiac sense (‘les battements du cœur’). Flaubert is specifically rejecting the platitudes and clichés collected in *Le Dictionnaire des idées reçues* here, and so for him style should be individuating enough to resist bourgeois subjectivity as well as falling into an early grave. Reading aloud is the best means of discovering a sentence’s ability to endure and withstand scrutiny. However, rather than denoting the circumstances of verisimilitude, or ‘the social, political, historical, and personal context’,<sup>53</sup> the ‘conditions of life’ promote a kind of ongoing vitality through the voice, signified by ‘the direct reading *out*’ (*LC*: 1339) learnt from Flaubert, as well as the instruction to ‘read *aloud*’ Loti’s prose (*LHL* I: 208).

---

<sup>51</sup> Bradbury, ed., in *CFHJ*, XVIII, p. 417 n.113.

<sup>52</sup> Gustave Flaubert ‘Préface’ to Louis Bouilhet, *Dernières chansons: poésies posthumes* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1880), pp. 3-34 (p. 30). The connection is noted by Herford, *Retrospect*, pp. 212-3.

<sup>53</sup> David McWhirter, “‘The Whole Chain of Relation and Responsibility’: Henry James and the New York Edition”, in *Henry James’s New York Edition: The Construction of Authorship*, ed. by David McWhirter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 1-22 (p. 1).

The phrase used to characterise Loti's prose style, its 'resistance to devouring time', worked especially hard on James's imagination.<sup>54</sup> It appears again, late in *What Maisie Knew*, when Sir Claude asks Maisie to come away with him and Mrs Beale on condition that she leave Mrs Wix. Maisie wants to see Mrs Wix before 'she could do her sum', her 'settlement' which 'loomed' before her 'like an impossible sum on a slate' (*WMK*: 440):

She met at present no demand whatever of her obligation; she simply plunged, to avoid it, deeper into the company of Sir Claude. She saw nothing that she had seen hitherto – no touch in the foreign picture that had at first been always before her. The only touch was that of Sir Claude's hand, and to feel her own in it was her mute resistance to time (*WMK*: 441).

This mute resistance concentrates the whole horizon of longing, a final attempt to preserve a childhood lost by a particularised gesture whose yearned-for force depends upon the history of previous gestures to which it alludes and which make it possible. This helpless passivity in the hands of others makes Maisie's final meeting of hands with Sir Claude, in the company of Mrs Beale, all the more poignant: the 'weight with which her daughter was now to feel her hand' only makes her feel 'the burden of time' more acutely (*WMK*: 392).<sup>55</sup> For Mary Anne O'Farrell, the moment reveals how the 'James who knows what Maisie knows, in writing his novels understands that manners are also practices of mourning, attempts, like so much else in the world, to manage time and death and loss'.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> In *The Ivory Tower*, Rosanna Gaw admires Gussy Bradham's formidable 'resources of resistance to time and thought [...] things of assertion and application in an extraordinary degree, things of a straight cold radiance and of an emphasis that was like the stamp of hard flat feet' (*IT*: 49).

<sup>55</sup> Sir Claude's last touch recalls Mrs Wix's more forcefully possessive hand that will triumphantly gain ownership of Maisie: '[t]hat hand had shown, altogether, these twenty-four hours, a new capacity for closing, and one of the truths the child could least resist was that a certain greatness had now come to Mrs Wix' (*WMK*: 356-7). For Tony Tanner, this 'hands theme' reminds us that Maisie 'is an orphan, an abandoned child (left by her mother alone in "the empty garden and the deeper dusk")', *The Reign of Wonder: Naivety and Reality in American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 290.

<sup>56</sup> Mary Anne O'Farrell, 'Manners', in *Henry James in Context*, ed. by McWhirter, p. 201.

Critics have frequently understood Maisie's resistance as social rather than temporal; Robert Pippin notes that 'Maisie becomes "Maisie" only *against* Ida, finally against the originally beloved Mrs Beale, with, but not really for, Mrs Wix, for and at the same time against Sir Claude, and so forth'.<sup>57</sup> However, the 'Preface' to *What Maisie Knew* implies a connection between Maisie's verities of non-compliance and her temporal resistance. Contemplating the 'question of the particular kind of truth of resistance I might be able to impute to my central figure, *some* intensity, some continuity of resistance being naturally of the essence of the subject', James writes the following:

Successfully to resist (to resist, that is, the strain of observation and the assault of experience) what would that be, on the part of so young a person, but to remain fresh, and still fresh, and to have even a freshness to communicate? – the case being with Maisie to the end that she treats her friends to the rich little spectacle of objects embalmed in her wonder. She wonders, in other words, to the end, to the death – the death of her childhood, properly speaking; after which (with the inevitable shift, sooner or later, of her point of view) her situation will change and become another affair, subject to other measurements and with a new centre altogether. (*LC2*: 1161)

Resistance to others here operates as a way of resisting time; the more resistance, the more 'freshness', the more Maisie remains 'young'. The implications of this resistance may seem destructive as well as enlivening. When James writes that the 'case being with Maisie to the end that she treats her friends to the rich little spectacle of objects embalmed in her wonder', 'to the end' either signifies 'to the last' or 'to the purpose'. Both possibilities are audible when James writes that Maisie 'wonders, in other words, to the end, to the death – the death of her childhood'. Maisie's wonder not only ends at the point at which her childhood ends, but her wonder might even have as its purpose or *telos* the death of her childhood. This

---

<sup>57</sup> Robert B. Pippin, 'On Maisie's Knowing Her Own Mind', in *A Companion to Henry James*, ed. by Greg. W. Zacharias (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 121-38 (p. 128). Resistance thus operates as a mode of self-discovery rather than as a refusal of forms of mutual dependency, the latter being explored in Robert Pippin, *Moral Life*, p. 80.



would imply a sacrificial logic, as if the freshness ensured by such resistance also lives off the figurative death of her own childhood.<sup>58</sup> ‘Embalmed’ objects are usually already dead, and ‘wonder’ not only sanctifies but curiously seems to condition her childhood’s demise. Resistance thus both preserves her freshness as long as possible and brings about the death of her youth. Whilst resistance is responsible for Maisie’s freshness, it suggests a conception of time that is simultaneously destructive and redemptive, because resistance to time is complicit in one form that this death takes: the figurative death of Maisie’s childhood.

However, even as resistance conveys a certain sacrificial logic, the ‘truth of resistance’ nevertheless implies that a lack of resistance is more disturbing than its excess. Resistance prevents Maisie resembling Pansy Osmond, who strikes Isabel Archer as a ‘blank page, a pure white surface’, with no ‘will, no power to resist, no sense of her own importance [...] she would easily be mystified, easily crushed; her force would be solely in her power to cling’ (*PL* 305). Whilst Coquelin possessed a ‘technical hardness, an almost inhuman perfection of surface’, the ‘compensation of this on the other hand is that it suggests durability and resistance, resistance I mean to the great corrupting contact with the public’ (*‘Coquelin’* (1915): 545). To offer no resistance is to be an ‘easy victim of fate’ (*PL*: 305). James’s reflections on audible prose style in Loti or Flaubert suggest that this applies as much to time as to the rapacity of people.

### 3.2 Conversations with the Dead

The same year as his account of Loti’s irresistible resistances to time, James published his essay ‘Frances Anne Kemble’ (1893).<sup>59</sup> This offers a very different conception of the persistence of the self after death through tone, one based on

---

<sup>58</sup> For a reading of the sacrificial logic of this passage, see Neil Hertz, *The End of the Line* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 125.

<sup>59</sup> In a letter of 20 January 1893 to William James, James writes that George Bentley, Kemble’s friend and publisher (*CWJ* II: 251) asked him to ‘write 25 pages on [Kemble’s] memory for the earliest number possible’ of *Temple Bar*, the magazine Bentley edited. See Herford, *Retrospect*, pp. 22-23 n.3.

friendship and conversation rather than resistance and opposition. It also demonstrates the role of intonation within the kind of commemorative practice indicated at the start of this chapter with regard to Emerson and Browning and which, in 1893, was becoming increasingly important to James. ‘Frances Anne Kemble’ is the first of many commemorative essays James would write on the occasion of losing his friends.<sup>60</sup> ‘In a parallel development’, Oliver Herford notes, James ‘also began to reconsider authors whom he had first read when he was young, and with whom he had kept some personal association: Flaubert (1893 and 1902), Hawthorne (1896 and 1904), George Sand (1897, 1902, and 1914), Prosper Mérimée (1898), Thackeray (1901), Balzac (1902, 1905, and 1913), and Robert Browning (1912)’.<sup>61</sup> Coquelin had died in 1909, and so the formulation of an ‘auditive intelligence’ in James’s 1915 ‘Introduction’ to his *Papers on Acting* can itself be understood as part of his broader commemorative practice of re-evaluating crucial literary figures towards the end of his life and contemplating what remains after their death. In ‘Frances Anne Kemble’, as in ‘Coquelin’ (1915), tone is seen as especially enduring.

James describes Kemble’s 1827 performance of Lady Macbeth as recalled by ‘an informant, then a very young man and an unfledged journalist’ who had gone, ‘by invitation, to Douglas Jerrold’s box’:

The manner in which [Kemble] read it, the tone that reached [James’s friend’s] ears, held him motionless and spell-bound till she had finished. To nothing more beautiful had he ever listened, nothing more beautiful was he ever to hear again. This was the sort of impression commemorated in Longfellow’s so

---

<sup>60</sup> Russell Lowell (1892), in *LC2*, pp. 516-40; ‘Frances Anne Kemble’ (1893), in *CWAD2*, pp. 388-420; George du Maurier (1897), in *LC2*, pp. 876-906; Alphonse Daudet (1897), in *LC2*, pp. 253-57; ‘The Late James Payn’, *Illustrated London News*, 9 (1898), 500; ‘Browning in Venice. Being Recollections by the Late Katharine De Kay Bronson, With a Prefatory Note by Henry James’, *Cornhill Magazine*, 12 (1902), 145-71, and Émile Zola (1903), in *LC2*, pp. 871-99, Dumas fils (1896), in *CWAD2*, pp. 421-41, W. D. Howells (1912), in *LC1*, pp. 506-10, and ‘Mr and Mrs James T. Fields’, in *LC1*, pp. 160-76. Because of the prominence given to the Kemble essay in this thesis, subsequent references take the form of ‘Kemble’ rather than *CWAD2*, as elsewhere.

<sup>61</sup> Herford, *Retrospect*, p. 23.

sincere sonnet: “Ah, precious evenings, all too swiftly sped!” (‘Kemble’: 399-400)

Taking something from both actor and playwright, but belonging wholly to neither, this tone is described as momentarily freed from its speaker, ‘holding’ the auditor on its own incomparable terms. The fleetingness of the voice will always be commemorated and never surpassed (‘[t]o nothing more beautiful had he ever listened, nothing more beautiful was he ever to hear again’). Here commemoration occurs in three, mutually informing, ways: James is commemorating the commemoration of his friend, which in turn invokes the commemoration of Longfellow’s ‘so sincere sonnet’. Kemble was ‘an admirable subject for the crystallisation of anecdote, for encompassing legend’ (‘Kemble’: 390), and if ‘we have a definite after-life in the amount of illustration that may gather about us’, James writes, ‘few vivid names ought to fade more slowly’ than hers (‘Kemble’: 390). Partly as a result of the epoch to which her tone granted James access, and partly as a result of her retirement from the stage at an early age and return to London late in life (she left America for England in January 1877), she ‘used often to say of people who met her during the later years of her life, “[n]o wonder they were surprised and bewildered, poor things – they supposed I was dead!”’ (‘Kemble’: 389). Kemble’s afterlife was so inseparable from her life that it preceded her death, and this reinforces James’s own commemoration in the form of his essay on her life.

Kemble’s tone significantly contributes to these kinds of commemorative doublings. She recalls Longfellow’s poem in a letter of 21 May 1876 and how she received from his wife ‘a lovely nosegay, and from him the manuscript copy of the beautiful sonnet, with which he has immortalized my Shakespeare Readings’.<sup>62</sup> ‘[I]mmortalized’ is an important word easily overlooked in this expression of gratitude because the poem, ‘Sonnet: On Mrs Kemble’s Readings from

---

<sup>62</sup> Fanny Kemble, *Further Records 1848-1883: A Series of Letters by Frances Anne Kemble*, 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1890), I, p. 284.

Shakespeare', not only immortalises Kemble's tone, but describes its reanimation of the Shakespearian 'dead':

O Precious evenings! all too swiftly sped!  
Leaving us heirs to amplest heritages  
Of all the best thoughts of the greatest sages,  
And giving tongues unto the silent dead!  
How our hearts glowed and trembled as she read,  
Interpreting by tones the wondrous pages  
Of the great poet who foreruns the ages,  
Anticipating all that shall be said!  
O happy Reader! having for thy text  
The magic book, whose Sibylline leaves have caught  
The rarest essence of all human thought!  
O happy Poet! by no critic vexed!  
How must thy listening spirit now rejoice  
To be interpreted by such a voice!<sup>63</sup>

The origins of this 'so sincere sonnet' are given in the poet's own account of a visit made to Boston by Kemble on 20 February 1849. Longfellow is recorded as having attended her performances of Shakespeare, but on one occasion recalls that '[w]e did not go last night to hear "Othello"'. I wrote this morning a sonnet on Mrs Butler's readings.'<sup>64</sup> Six days later, in Cambridge, Longfellow recalled reading it aloud.<sup>65</sup> Longfellow's recollection of reading a poem recalling a reading of Kemble, itself then recalled by James's own recollection of his friend, renders one of the sonnet's own subjects – ventriloquism, speaking with and through other people's tones of voice who may have long since departed – especially marked. Kemble herself recalled 'reading the sonnet on my readings', adding another layer to the poem's early reception history.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 'Sonnet: On Mrs Kemble's Readings from Shakespeare', in *The Seaside and Fireside* (Boston: Ticknor Reed and Fields, 1850), pp. 82-83.

<sup>64</sup> Samuel Longfellow, ed., *The Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, with Extracts from his Journals and Correspondence*, 3 vols (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1891), II, p. 145.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Kemble, *Further Records*, I, p. 285.

Kemble's 'tone' is unusually predisposed to these kinds of commemoration which do not occur in isolation but depend upon a community of sympathetic listeners. In Longfellow's poem, the voice begins by animating the silent dead, but as we read on this enlivenment becomes inseparable from the way the dead themselves become 'listening' entities. They may need to be given voice by the reader, but we should not forget the care with which they themselves listen too. An apparent opposition between the dead spirit, which hears, and the living reader, who voices, creates a more intimate correspondence. A similar reciprocity occurs as the poem arcs from 'us', the auditors, delighting in having the depths of Shakespeare revealed to us, to Shakespeare himself, grateful for being blessed by such tones that preserve his immortal life. A tone is only as good as its audience, and this thrill of sociability is the mode in which Kemble's immortalisation occurs; she 'could communicate the thrill if her auditor could receive it: the want of vibration was much more likely to be in the auditor' ('Kemble': 391).

Conversation embodies this ideal of an animating sociability capable of reviving the rapidly disappearing London world and preserving the 'far-away past to which she gave continuity' ('Kemble': 391). The 'old London' ('Kemble': 409) that 'lived again in her talk and, to a great degree, in her habits and standards and tone' ('Kemble': 392) meant that her 'conversation swarmed with people and with criticism of people, with the ghosts of a dead society' and 'reanimated the old drawing-rooms, relighted the old lamps, retuned the old pianos' ('Kemble': 409). Tone is at once a 'returning' and a 'retuning' of the past here, the reiterated prefixes ('reanimated [...] relighted [...] retuned') renewing historical connections. Kemble's tone was uniquely capable of preserving the past because it was unprecedentedly

‘well connected’ in the best sense of the phrase, allowing personal continuities to extend across multiple degrees of separation, from Sarah Siddons to Walter Scott.<sup>67</sup>

Under these sociable connections, a tone is only as good as its auditor, and James frequently notes the eloquence of Kemble’s ear as well as her voice.<sup>68</sup> In one recollection of a performance of Sheridan Knowles’s *The Hunchback* at Bridgewater House, the power of her attention is even capable of reviving the tones of the dead, albeit in the context of watching a play rather than conversant exchange. So ‘vulgar and detestable’ was this ‘rendering’ that ‘it brought back across the gulf of years her different youth and all the ghosts of the dead, the first interpreters – her father, Charles Kemble, the Sir Thomas Clifford, Sheridan Knowles himself, the Master Walter, the vanished Helen, the vanished Modus’, all of whom ‘seemed [...] before

---

<sup>67</sup> Her mere presence ‘made us touch her aunt Mrs Siddons, and whom does Mrs Siddons not make us touch? She had sat to Sir Thomas Lawrence for her portrait, and Sir Thomas Lawrence was in love with Sir Joshua’s Tragic Muse. She had breakfasted with Sir Walter Scott, she had sung with Tom Moore, she had listened to Edmund Kean and to Mademoiselle Mars’ (‘Kemble’: 391), as well as making Alfred d’Orsay, Charles Greville, Maria Edgeworth all present (‘Kemble’: 409). Such links enable a continuity extending to James’s own circle too: Kemble was ‘the mother of his friend Mrs Sarah Butler Wister (who was in turn mother of his friend Owen Wister, author of *The Virginian*)’, Philip Horne, “‘A Palpable Imaginable Visitable Past’: Henry James and the Eighteenth Century”, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 32 (2008), 14-28 (16). This also distinguishes Kemble from Minnie Temple, who possessed ‘such a breathing immortal reality that the mere statement of her death conveys little meaning’, as suggested in James’s letter to his mother on 26 March 1870 (*HJL* I: 218).

<sup>68</sup> James notes, wryly, the ‘humility’ in Kemble’s own ‘fondness for being read to, even by persons professing no proficiency in the art – an attitude, indeed, that, with its great mistress for a listener, was the only discreet one to be assumed’ (‘Kemble’: 404). ‘To know Mrs Kemble’, James writes when attending a reading of *Nero* (1872) by its author William Wetmore Story ‘during the winter of 1873-4’ in Kemble’s apartment in Rome, ‘was to know, certainly, the supreme reader – a range of tone, an expression, a variety that nothing could equal; but it was to know at the same time, wonderfully enough, a listener almost as articulate, whose admirable face was then scarce less at play than when it accompanied her admirable voice’ (*WWS* II: 254-5). In a scene conveying collaborative thrill between speakers and listeners as much as the uniquely transformative force of Kemble’s own tone, James records an exchange between Mrs Richard Greville (née Sabine Matilda Thellusson) and his ‘admirable old friend’, Fanny Kemble, when she consents to “‘hear” Mrs Greville, the ‘aspirant’ and ‘rash adventurer’, only to leap up and correct her (*NSBMY*: 450-1). There is comedy here: Kemble’s dynamic of consent and correction responds to the obvious extravagance of Mrs Greville’s ‘failure of the grand manner or the penetrating note’ (*NSBMY*: 450).

the tones of their successors to interpose a mute reproach – a reproach that looked intensely out of her eyes’ (‘Kemble’: 399). The ‘rendering’ may bring back the ‘ghosts of the dead’ and the ‘tones of their successors’, but this return has the effect of reinforcing rather than overcoming the ‘gulf of years’ (‘Kemble’: 399).

Kemble’s ‘mute reproach’ might have been especially marked because she had herself played the ‘old part of Julia’ in “The Hunchback”, as documented in *Records of Later Life* (1882), and where she recalls hearing Mademoiselle Rachel from the audience: ‘I heard a voice out of the darkness, and it appeared to me almost close to my feet, exclaiming, in a tone of vibrating depth of which I shall never forget, “*Ah, bien, bien, très bien!*”’<sup>69</sup> Kemble also alludes to the ‘tones of their successors’ when she recalls the ‘first interpreters’ of *The Hunchback* in the second volume of her *Records of a Girlhood* (1878).<sup>70</sup> James would have known the passage, since he reviewed the work in 1878,<sup>71</sup> and describes it, along with her *Records of Later Life*, as ‘one of the most animated autobiographies in the language’ (‘Kemble’: 405). Just as the ‘tones’ of *The Hunchback*’s first interpreters are revived in a way that increases their historical remoteness, so does Kemble’s *Reminiscences* ‘bring back to us this happier time’, though ‘it can hardly be said that they make it seem nearer’ (*LCL*: 1070-71).

For James, it seemed ‘not fifty but a hundred years ago’ that Kemble ‘renewed the popularity’ of the great English theatrical roles of ‘Otway and Massinger, of *Mrs Beverley* and *Lady Townely*’ (*LCL*: 1071).<sup>72</sup> There are various possible reasons why James felt half a century as though it were a hundred years, foremost amongst which were the technological accelerations occurring within his own lifetime: ‘[t]he generations move so fast and change so much’ (‘Kemble’:

---

<sup>69</sup> Frances Anne Kemble, *Records of Later Life*, 3 vols (London: Bentley, 1882), II, p. 100.

<sup>70</sup> Even though she writes of its success, Kemble notes it is ‘a very satisfactory play to see, but let nobody who has seen it well acted attempt to read it in cold blood!’, *Records of a Girlhood*, 3 vols (London: Bentley, 1878), III, p. 315.

<sup>71</sup> *LCL*, pp. 1069-71.

<sup>72</sup> Phillip Massinger (1583-1640), Thomas Otway (1652–14 April 1685), Mrs Beverly is a character in James Shirley’s (1596-1666) *The Gamester* (1637), Lady Townley in George Etherege’s (c1636-1692) *Man Of Mode, or, Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676).

409).<sup>73</sup> If Kemble's tone and ear provides James with access to a bygone age, it nevertheless preserves this historical remoteness. This distance suggests a limit to the good company Kemble's tone enables with the dead, not least when James struggles to overcome the absolute cessation represented by her *own* death. Because Kemble enabled communication to an entire society, her passing signified the rupture of an age as well as a life: the 'end of some reign or the fall of some empire', as James writes in his letter to Kemble's eldest daughter, Sarah Wister on 20 January 1893 (*HJL* III: 400), heightening the impact of her cessation.<sup>74</sup>

The potential limits to such renewal are implied when Kemble's 'long backward reach into time' ('Kemble': 391) is recalled in James's 'Preface' to *The Aspern Papers*, where the past is also understood as palpable and amicably conversant with the present:

I delight in a palpable imaginable *visitable* past – in the nearer distances and clearer mysteries, the marks and signs of a world we may reach over to as by making a long arm we grasp an object at the other end of our own table. (*LC2*: 1177)

The etiolated arm of retrospection reaches across the 'firm and continuous table', enabling the preservation of 'the poetry of the thing outlived and lost and gone' (*LC2*: 1177). The narrator of *The Aspern Papers* also possesses the same thrill of contact that James felt for Kemble's tone, noting early on how the 'old lady's voice was very thin and weak, but it had an agreeable, cultivated murmur and there was

---

<sup>73</sup> 'His career as a writer began in 1864, towards the close of the American Civil War, often called the first modern war; and numerous "revolutions" accelerating transport and communications—steamships, and the tourism they permitted; railways; the telegraph; the telephone; the gramophone; and electric light among them—made the last fifty years seem a whole century', Horne, "'A Palpable'", 16.

<sup>74</sup> 'I saw your mother go – saw it with the tenderest & most leavetaking eyes: & the reconstruction of the soul is to me the most difficult of all imaginations [...]. I wanted only to express the intensity – to *our* eyes – of cessation!' (*HJL* III: 400) As Fred Kaplan notes, the letter suggests that '[t]he dead were never to be relocated let alone revived, except within the limits of personal memory', *Henry James: The Imagination of Genius: A Biography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1992), p. 357.



wonder in the thought that that individual note had been in Jeffrey Aspern's ear' ('Aspern': 23). Indeed, critics have noted the similarities between Kemble and the fictional depiction of Juliana Bordereau, each respectively aging in self-imposed solitude, and depending in part upon the 'formidable' endowment of their 'magnificent past'.<sup>75</sup>

The notion that the 'palpability' of the past might involve an essential audibility is also invoked in 'The Diary of a Man of Fifty' (1879). The story depicts the return of a bachelor to Florence after a long absence, and he remembers a previous love affair as 'palpable, audible presence' whereby he 'could almost hear the rustle of her dress on the gravel': '[w]hy do we make such an ado about death?', he asks himself (*MFT* II: 96). However, the qualities of tone associated with Kemble are more directly evident in the unfinished *The Sense of the Past*. Mr Pendrel reads the work of a distant relative, Ralph Pendrel's "'An Essay in Aid of the Reading of History'" (*SP*: 41) and notes he had 'nowhere seen the love of old things, of the scrutable, palpable past, nowhere felt an ear for stilled voices, as precious as they are faint, as seizable, truly, as they are fine' as in these pages (*SP*: 41). The 'scrutable, palpable past' is here an attempt to catch the note of history, and the phrase preserves the cadence of the 'palpable imaginable *visitable* past' in *The Aspern Papers* 'Preface', a different passage of which is again recalled by Ralph's relish for the historical influence of his name: it 'had something of a backward, as well as of a not too sprawling lateral reach' (*SP*: 3). Greatly impressed with his essay, Mr Pendrel leaves Ralph an old London house, within which hangs a painting of an unknown gentleman painted in the unusual pose of having his back turned to the viewer. He exchanges identities with this figure, and becomes his ancestor, whilst maintaining his consciousness of his own modernity. This transports Ralph back to 1820, where he discovers that he is the cousin of and suitor to Molly Midmore (though Ralph

---

<sup>75</sup> Tamara Follini, 'The Friendship of Fanny Kemble and Henry James', *The Cambridge Quarterly*, 19 (1990), 230-242 (242). For Horne, James 'sees this past as embodied in the form of an old person who can be visited and talked to, usually an old lady—like the fabulously antique Juliana Bordereau', "'A Palpable'", 15.

finds himself far more attached to Molly's sister, Nan). For Peter Rawlings, this presentation of history indicates how James came 'to see the past in a mixed idiom of the natural and the super-natural, and as embodied only in people such as Frances Anne Kemble who are "historic" because of the "curious contacts" with it that they are "able, as it were, to transmit"' ('Kemble': 391).<sup>76</sup>

This historical 'evidence of a sort for which there had never been documents enough' (*SP*: 48) is frequently depicted as a tone, which Ralph desires for its ability to make the past more palpable and audible. When Molly announces Ralph's arrival, adding that he is to provide the "'kiss of peace'", Ralph 'make[s] sure that he had heard Mrs Midmore's voice before he saw her face' (*SP*: 139). When she proclaims her readiness "'to receive it [the kiss] too when you've both had enough of it!'"

this high clear tone fell on our young man's ear and constituted at a stroke, without the aid of his in the least otherwise taking her in, his first impression of Mrs Midmore. It was anything but the voice of alarm, and yet was as fine as a knife-edge for cutting straight into his act of union with the girl. Never had he heard a human sound so firm at once and so friendly, so rich in itself and so beautiful, and at the same time raising so the question of whom it could be used by and what presence it denoted. (*SP*: 140)

Such is 'the note and measure of the close social order into which he had plunged' (*SP* 140), and 'no approach to such a quality of tone as she dealt in had ever in his own country greeted his ear' (*SP*: 14-42). Ralph thus 'had never yet seen manner at home at that pitch, any more than he had veritably heard utterance' (*SP*: 142), and this conveys tone's sustaining capacity, giving him the sense that there is 'no length to which they mightn't bear him' (*SP*: 145), just as Emerson's tone 'for a long time ke[pt] me going' and 'carr[ied] me in fact more or less on' as an 'absolutely abiding measure' (*NSBMY*: 165).

How had this fond presumption grown, he might afterwards have wondered, unless by just listening to her voice of voices? – her beautiful bold tone simply

---

<sup>76</sup> Cited by Rawlings, *The Abuse*, p. 131.

leading the way, as he subsequently made the matter out, and his ear, all but irrespective of its sense, holding and holding it, indifferent for the hour to what it meant, and yet withal informed, by its mere pitch and quality, of numberless things that were to guard him against possible mistakes. (*SP*: 145)

It is not the words, but the mere ‘pitch and quality’ that Ralph wants to catch and seize. However, tone is also the element that Ralph is unable to control. When Molly says that her mother would have given Ralph leave had he asked for it (“‘she would certainly have given it!’” (*SP*: 122)), Ralph ‘at once saw from the tone of this that what she referred to as so licensed was the plunge into intimacy just enacted’ (*SP*: 122). But rather than assuring him, this tone ‘put him a trifle out of tune that the most he himself had meant was that he might have inquired of his cousin’s convenience as to presenting himself; and to feel his deference to that propriety’ (*SP*: 122). Ralph gradually becomes aware that he does ‘precipitate wonders, at a given juncture, just by some shade of a tone, a mere semiquaver’, and grows aware that there is ‘something all the while he clearly couldn’t help’ (*SP*: 236). The Midmores are increasingly unable to read ‘into his solicitous speech an imputable sense’ (*SP*: 213), speech which ‘had somehow annihilated them, or had at least converted them to the necessarily void and soundless state’ transforming them ‘to stone or wood or wax’ (*SP*: 210). As Denis Donoghue notes, such ‘[m]oods and tones have to turn upon minute disclosures, avowals not absolutely convincing, little gaps and fissures where only a seamless web of goodwill and fervour would suffice’.<sup>77</sup> For Philip Horne, Ralph ‘cannot sustain his *tone*’.<sup>78</sup> Without the kind of genuine reciprocity embodied by Kemble, the relationship Ralph seeks with the past will forever be betrayed by his modernity.

This dynamic of listening and conversation offers a far more generous understanding of one of the most notorious examples of James’s involvement with the preservation of the memory of the dead: the infamous letter started and stopped

---

<sup>77</sup> Denis Donoghue, ‘Attitudes Towards History: A Preface to *The Sense of the Past*’, *Salmagundi*, 69-9 (1985-1986), 107-24 (119).

<sup>78</sup> Horne, “‘A Palpable’”, 24.

between 15 and 18 November 1913 to his nephew Henry James III in preparation for the 'Family Book' that would become *Notes of a Son and Brother*.

And when I laid hands upon the letters [...] I found myself again in such close relation with your Father, such a revival of relation as I hadn't known since his death, and which was a passion of tenderness for doing the best thing by him that the material allowed, and which I seemed to feel him in the room and at my elbow asking me for as I worked and as he listened. (*HJL* IV: 802)

The ethical implications of James's claimed continuity with historical experiences that he had not had might raise certain objections here, and critics have resisted the potential encroachment this documentary access implies.<sup>79</sup> This letter certainly evinces a conception of textual editing very far removed from our own, more like a transformation, or even appropriation, of the identity of the author, William, despite being comprised of no more than certain 'amendments in order of words, degrees of emphasis etc' (*HJL* IV: 803).<sup>80</sup> One example is provided when William wrote 'Poor old Abe!' in reference to 'Lincoln's violent death' on 12 September 1865.<sup>81</sup> But when Henry read aloud the letter in question, he corrected 'Abe' to 'Abraham' because

I could *hear* him say Abraham and couldn't hear him say Abe, and the former came back to me as sincere, also graver and tenderer and more like ourselves, among whom I couldn't image any "Abe" ejaculation under the shock of his death as possible. (*HJL* IV: 804)

---

<sup>79</sup> For Michael Millgate, the letter is 'fully reflective of the characteristic imperiousness of [James's] irresistibly expansive imagination', *Testamentary Acts: Browning, Tennyson, James, Hardy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 96.

<sup>80</sup> Cameron, pp. 183-4. See also Horne *Revision*, pp. 217-18; Follini notes the tendency of editors to suppress this letter, 'Pandora's Box: The Family Correspondence in *Notes of a Son and Brother*', *Cambridge Quarterly*, 25 (1996), 26-40 (32).

<sup>81</sup> This is how the phrase appears in *The Letters of William James. Edited by His Son Henry James*, 2 vols (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1920), I, pp. 67, 66.

The rationale for this alteration was that nobody in James's family could have used this colloquialism, and James thus hopes to present his brother in the 'best possible light', 'more easily and engagingly readable and thereby more tasted and liked – from the moment there was no excess of these *soins* and no violence done to his real identity' (*HJL* IV: 803). However, rather than taking the liberty of appropriation, James's passion of tenderness means that these '*soins*' ('cares') might establish some shared psychic realm between the brothers – as though James might not only *hear* William's voice in the room but William might also be able to 'listen' to his own in some spiritual conversation occurring after death. James's temperament, in Tamara Follini's words, was 'engaged simultaneously with intensely consulting and intensely resisting the ferocity of linearity'.<sup>82</sup> Even if these words are not those William actually used, they nevertheless make his voice more present, as though tone facilitated other ways of being true to memory than just being accurate about it.

For Follini, William's letter does not provide evidence of the kind of imperious acquisitiveness with which it has been occasionally associated:

When James heard letters, he spoke back to them, he wrote back to them, in revisions which imagine an ideal mutuality, an enclosure of corresponding voices, a claim on an intimacy of relation and possession enacted in the spaces of silent-speaking words.<sup>83</sup>

This is consistent with the manner in which memories in *Notes of a Son and Brother* create a 'harmonious polyphony' which do 'not challenge the destinations of his own story nor interrupt his voice with distinct tones of their own'.<sup>84</sup> We might compare this correspondence with the scene in *The Wings of the Dove* when Densher imagines

---

<sup>82</sup> Tamara Follini, "'A Geometry of His Own': Temporality, Referentiality, and Ethics in the Autobiographies', in *Palgrave Advances in Henry James Studies*, ed. by Peter Rawlings (Palgrave: Hampshire and New York, 2007), pp. 212-38 (p. 214).

<sup>83</sup> Tamara Follini, 'Henry James and the Spaces of "Silent-Speaking Words"', <<https://centerforhenryjamesstudies.weebly.com/uploads/3/8/1/0/38108301/follini.pdf>> [accessed 18 October 2019], no page number.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

Milly's letter as a 'priceless pearl cast [...] into the fathomless sea', a 'sacrifice of something sentient and throbbing, something that, for the spiritual ear, might have been audible as a faint far wail. This was the sound he cherished when alone in the stillness of his rooms' (*WD*: 569-70). Densher protects the stillness as a means of preservation: '[h]e sought and guarded the stillness, so that it might prevail there till the inevitable sounds of life, once more, comparatively coarse and harsh, should smother and deaden it' (*WD*: 570). Like 'the scarce audible pathetic wail to his strained ear, of all the old baffled forsworn possibilities' and 'mystical other world' that Brydon imagines hearing in 'The Jolly Corner' ('*JC*': 216), Milly's letter shares with William's the power to preserve a relationship more powerfully in imagination than reality, and this preservation must necessarily occur as a voice which can convey the intimacy of contact without the necessity of physical presence, the kind of proximity that James heard, thrillingly, in Kemble's tone.

### 3.3 Last Words

In every parting there is an image of death.

George Eliot

On the eve of Prince Amerigo's marriage to Maggie Verver in *The Golden Bowl*, Charlotte seeks to imbue their exchange with a finality that will allow their relationship to continue, even after their imminent rupture:

"I came back for this. Not really for anything else. For this," she repeated as, under the influence of her tone, the Prince had already come to a pause.

"For 'this'?" He spoke as if the particular thing she indicated were vague to him – or were, rather, a quantity that couldn't, at the most, be much.

It would be as much, however, as she should be able to make it. "To have one hour alone with you." (*GB*: 63)

Charlotte's tone works powerfully upon the Prince, but not in a way that enables immediate comprehension. His 'as if' nevertheless leaves scope for the possibility that he knows full well how 'much' her tone suggests, but still acts as if he did not. Either way, Charlotte wants to 'make' their final meeting important enough to survive their separation. Charlotte does not only want to "say" this to Amerigo, but wants him to remember her having said it, "to the listening air", and "into her own open ears" (GB: 69): "I want to have said it – that's all; I want not to have failed to say it" (GB: 69). James often describes tone as occupying this kind of future pluperfect tense.<sup>85</sup> In *The Tragic Muse*, when Nick Dormer asks Mr Carteret what will happen if he does not prove as clever as he is expected to be, Mr Carteret replies: "[o]h, it won't do – it won't do" [...] in a tone his companion was destined to remember afterwards' (TM I: 333). Madame de Vionnet says that she is "really and truly" largely responsible for Chad's transformation 'in a tone that was to take its place with him [Strether] among things remembered' (CFHJ XVIII: 159). By making a memory in this way, Charlotte maintains the possibility of a degree of control over Amerigo (and Maggie), even later on when the narrative seems to be conspiring most against her. She wants the memory of her exchange always to be "with" Amerigo so that he will "never be able quite to get rid of it" (GB: 69). These words allow a relation to continue because, rather than despite of, the finality of the tone in which they are uttered. Because they can by definition only be said once, the intonation of last words can be all the more memorable; their staying power arises because rather than in spite of their evanescence, so that the last word may become a lasting word.

---

<sup>85</sup> For Paul B. Armstrong 'anticipating understanding' reveals the 'foreknowledge that is essential for all interpretation', *The Phenomenology of Henry James* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), pp. 158-9. Dorrit Cohn terms this 'analeptic prolepsis', taking the phrase from Gérard Genette, "First Shock of Complete Perception": The Opening Episode of *The Golden Bowl*, Volume 2', *HJR*, 22.1 (2001), 1-9. Ruth Bernard Yeazell notes the problem with the phrase, suggesting instead 'proleptic analepsis', if the phrase is to be used at all, 'Remembrance of Things Present in *The Ambassadors*', *HJR*, 38.3 (2017), 231-37 (237 n.3).

This section will keep returning to this exchange between Charlotte and Amerigo, not only to give a sense of what it might mean for a last word to compel re-visitation, but because doing so will cast light on some of James's other significant final exchanges with which it can be compared. First, however, it is worth noting that last words were unprecedentedly valued in the nineteenth century and concentrated this tension between cessation and survival. As Diana Fuss suggests:

Informed by three centuries of *ars moriendi* literature, Victorians in particular valued last words for the spiritual, social, and familial functions they could perform: saving one's soul, settling one's affairs, leaving one's legacy, instructing one's heirs, planning one's funeral, and consoling one's family and friends.<sup>86</sup>

For Justin Sider, the valedictory mode of the 'departing speaker' allowed poets to imagine 'forms of intimacy' across Victorian culture: last words 'are a transaction not only between speaker and addressee, but also between economies of address, between the present scene of utterance and its future path of transmission'.<sup>87</sup> Michael Wheeler suggests that 'the last words of the dying [...] had a special significance for the Victorians, and became something of a literary convention in their own right'.<sup>88</sup> This is partly because of the conventions of literature itself, as Garrett Stewart notes: 'characters die more often, more slowly, and more vocally in the Victorian age than ever before or since', so that death is 'the ultimate form of closure plotted within the closure of form'.<sup>89</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup> Diana Fuss, *Dying Modern: A Meditation on Elegy* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), p. 10.

<sup>87</sup> For Justin Sider, a 'speaker's departure becomes, paradoxically, a site of renewal' through print or public circulation, *Parting Words: Victorian Poetry and Public Address* (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2018), pp. 1, 2.

<sup>88</sup> Michael Wheeler, *Death and the Future Life in Victorian Literature and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 30. Cited in Sider, *Parting*, p. 16.

<sup>89</sup> Garrett Stewart, *Death Sentences: Styles of Dying in British Fiction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 8. Cited by Sider, *Parting*, p. 16. Emphasis added.



Nevertheless, *The Golden Bowl* has acquired a unique ‘air of finality’, partly because it was one of James’s last completed novels, despite writing a great deal after its completion, as Hazel Hutchison’s notes: ‘[i]t is not the author’s last work, but it is in some way his last word. It presents the high point of his style and the culmination of his artistic vision.’<sup>90</sup> Indeed, in a letter to Mary Ward, James admits that ‘I shall never again do anything so long-winded’ (*HJL* IV: 415). For Gabriel Pearson, this is ‘The Novel to End all Novels’, and ‘[e]very subsequent novel can be viewed [...] in some more or less posthumous relationship to the great classical nineteenth-century novel, whose last paradoxical example is *The Golden Bowl*’.<sup>91</sup> This termination is cultural as well as generic, marking the decline of ‘late bourgeois supremacy and security’.<sup>92</sup> The novel is thus conceived as an ‘ultimate attempt to salvage imaginatively the ideals of a civilization that [James’s] deepest instincts warned him was doomed’,<sup>93</sup> and this ‘note of isolation and departure [...] sounds through the concluding pages of the novel’.<sup>94</sup> Given the importance of finality within James’s personal, cultural and generic contexts, it is perhaps unsurprising that critics have been drawn to the last words of *The Golden Bowl* as one of the most significant ‘deliberately failed attempts to contain experience within conventional ending patterns’.<sup>95</sup> Few, however, have considered the role of tone in these interactions, as demonstrated in the scene between Charlotte and Amerigo.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, since these last words do not only occur at the end of the novel, but in some of its earliest exchanges, last words to some extent constitute experience itself rather than just signaling its termination, a way of responding and reacting to discontinuities and

---

<sup>90</sup> Hazel Hutchison, *Seeing*, p. 137.

<sup>91</sup> Gabriel Pearson, ‘The Novel to End All Novels: *The Golden Bowl*’, in *The Air of Reality*, ed. by Goode, pp. 301-60 (p. 360).

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 303.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 301.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Carol J. Sklenicka, ‘Henry James’s Evasion of Ending in *The Golden Bowl*’, *HJR*, 4.1 (1982), 50-56 (50).

<sup>96</sup> See also David M. Craig, ‘The Indeterminacy of the End: Maggie Verver and the Limits of the Imagination’, *HJR*, 2 (1982), 133-44 (142); Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Language and Knowledge*, pp. 100-30.

ruptures, to the developments and changes that occur within their lives and the lives of others.

James frequently depicts conversations between two lovers who stand before each other for the last time, and where the tone of their final words survives their parting. In *The Beast in the Jungle* (1903), John Marcher's final meeting with May Server gives him 'a dreadful sense of standing there before her for [...] the last time of their life' ('Beast': 232):

"You were to suffer your fate. That was not necessarily to know it."  
"How in the world – when what is such knowledge but suffering?"  
She looked up at him a while, in silence. "No – you don't understand."  
"I suffer," said John Marcher.  
"Don't, don't!"  
"How can I help at least *that*?"  
"*Don't!*" May Bartram repeated.  
She spoke it in a tone so special, in spite of her weakness, that he stared an instant – stared as if some light, hitherto hidden, had shimmered across his vision. Darkness again closed over it, but the gleam had already become for him an idea. "Because I haven't the right — ?"  
"Don't *know* – when you needn't," she mercifully urged. "You needn't – for we shouldn't."  
"Shouldn't?" If he could but know what she meant! ('Beast': 232-33)

May's tone seems to alleviate Marcher's fear 'that she would die without giving him light' ('Beast' 227). But it is not clear what this light is, or that he knows what it is either. May's intonation is particularly hard to determine. It first sounds like she says '[d]on't' in a tone of reprobation, as if to imply that Marcher should stop speaking. But it could refer directly to 'suffering', as though she were pleading or instructing Marcher to stop suffering, or that he has no right to suffer. May, however, corrects this interpretation by changing the stress from '[d]on't' to 'know', revealing that she has been saying '[d]on't' as a reference to '[d]on't understand', rather than to Marcher's claim that 'I suffer' (if knowledge and understanding are taken as synonymous). For Richard Brodhead, *The Beast in the Jungle* 'seems to have the largest possibilities for human salvation and loss attendant on its banalities of

phrase'.<sup>97</sup> The stress on '*don't*' is one example of this possibility, the glimmer of light, the hope to be saved from death contained in the intonation of a single syllable. It is to these last words that they keep returning: 'it was she herself therefore who brought him back, took up again, before she dismissed him, her last word of the other time' ('Beast': 229). But Marcher is unable to hear any possibility for salvation in May's tone, and they 'had parted forever in that strange talk' ('Beast': 233).

In Marcher's exchange with May, last words enforce an absolute end rather than a continuation. Strether's final words to Madame de Vionnet, when she claims that she wanted him as a friend, "[a]h, but you've *had* me!", are delivered 'with an emphasis that made an end' (CFHJ XVIII: 371). This could either imply a tone of regret that she *did* have him as a friend (or more), or a possible fatalistic acceptance that she has 'had' him in the sense of being duped. However, Charlotte's last word ensures a continuity, rather than an end. This is paradoxical, since last words might be normally conceived to be irreversibly conclusive, which is why James so frequently *refuses* the last word as a consolation to the bereaved,<sup>98</sup> in order to leave generous margin for disagreement, as in his letter to the journalist Jane Hill (married to Frank Harrison Hill) on 21 March 1879:

Nothing is my *last word* on anything – I am interminably supersubtle & analytic – & with the blessing of heaven, I shall live to make all sorts of representations of all sorts of things. (HJL II: 221)

---

<sup>97</sup> Brodhead, p. 184.

<sup>98</sup> James's letter to Grace Norton on 28 July 1883 comforts her in her isolation and despair, stressing that 'it is only a darkness, it is not an end, or *the* end [...] [b]efore the sufferings of others I am always utterly powerless, and your letter reveals such depths of suffering that I hardly know what to say to you. This indeed is not my last word – but it must be my first' (HJL II: 424). The reference to *Othello* ('supersubtle Venetian' (I. 3. 357)), might also remind us of Iago's last words, which James puts in the mouth of Nick Dormer in *The Tragic Muse* when he expresses his resistance to the scrutiny of the public gaze: "from this time forth I never will speak a word!" (TM I: 240) However, unlike James's refusal of the last word, Iago's withholds resolution in a way that is profoundly ungenerous: "[d]emand me nothing. What you know you know. From this time forth I will never speak word' (*Othello* V. 2. 301-32). Hyacinth uses the phrase to signal an irreversible transition, when he says to Millicent 'I shall soon become a mystery to you, for I mean from this time forth to cease to seek safety in concealment' (PC I: 523).

James's comment responds to Mrs Hill's complaint that the depiction of the two English ladies in *An International Episode* applies to English manners in general. James also defends the presentation of the two Englishmen in that story, in particular the manner in which they say "I say" too frequently and injudiciously.<sup>99</sup> In *In The Cage*, 'I say' is spoken by another English gentleman, Captain Everard with a singularity of tone exaggerated by its contrast with Mr Mudge, the telegraphist's fiancé: when the latter asks in what manner she will 'keep on' seeing the Captain, the telegraphist replies that she will do so by sitting "elsewhere" than in the park with him (*IC*: 120). Mr Mudge responds with "I say!", the 'ejaculation used also by Captain Everard, but, oh, with what a different sound!' (*IC*:120), causing considerable frustration: "[y]ou needn't 'say' – there's nothing to be said" (*IC*: 120). Despite the telegraphist's recognition that 'she should never see [Everard] again', she imagines him saying "I say" in a tone that might survive their parting, and even in some sense save their relationship (*IC*: 142). She further recognises that the only reason she 'hung on at Cocker's' was for 'the common fairness of a last word', the hope that he might 'just re-appear long enough to relieve her, to give her something she could take away' (*IC*: 144). Like Charlotte's tone in the park, this last word would give the telegraphist a *ricordo* or 'parting present' (*IC*: 144). Even as James's refusal of the last word in his letter to Mrs Hill avoids closure, the reverberations of the phrase under discussion ("I say") suggest occasions where last words do achieve futurity through finality, enabling the preservation of a relationship because of, rather than despite, the cessation they enforce as a result of the tone in which they are uttered.

---

<sup>99</sup> James is responding to the following passage in the review: '[m]en who have been to a public school and college do not preface all their remarks with "[o]h, I say!" That is not the slang of the stable or the club. That is the slang of the street' (*LL*: 102 n.2).

This paradox can be observed again in ‘Is There A Life After Death?’ when James recognises that the power of extinction may be for many ‘the last word on the matter’ (‘IAD’: 213), but which is not the last word for James:

I don’t mean to say that no sincere artist has ever been overwhelmed by life and found his connections with the infinite cut, so that his history may *seem* to represent for him so much evidence that this so easily awful world is the last word to us, and a horrible one at that (‘IAD’: 227).

Nothing being James’s last word on anything, this refusal of the last word leaves room for both the possibility of life after death and those unable to countenance it, unable to overcome the force with which ‘everything insufferably *continues* to die’ (‘IAD’: 215). However, the ‘last’ word does not just imply a categorical finality to be refused, but also refers to that which is immediately previous (as in a successive chain). The last word is not thereby always the final word, but also a preparation for the next, implying possible continuity at the moment of termination. A similar continuity is invoked in ‘Is There A Life After Death?’, where life after death is only conceivable if one has had a life before it: ‘[h]ow *can* there be a personal and a differentiated life “after,” it will then of course be asked, for those for whom there has been so little of one before?’ (‘IAD’: 201).<sup>100</sup> Charlotte echoes this sentiment, confessing to having had for weeks in her head the desire for one small hour (““or say for two”) to ““be as they used to be”, and to get it ““*before* – before what you’re going to do” and not ““[a]fter”” (GB: 68).

For Tessa Hadley, Charlotte’s tone tries to achieve continuity at the moment of parting by creating her own ‘generous breathing space’, ‘clearing a space for her own motives to be articulated aloud’.<sup>101</sup> Griffiths is sensitive to the ways in which a

---

<sup>100</sup> Henry James’s letter to Esther Stella Isaacs (Mrs Alfred Sutro) on 8 August 1914, where he describes the realisation that the war will make even the recent past discontinuous with the present, recalls the terms of this essay: ‘how impossible it seems to speak of anything *before* one speaks of the tremendous public matter—and then how impossible to speak of anything *after*!’ (LHJ II: 401).

<sup>101</sup> Hadley, p. 163.

writer may ‘develop a style which relies on the reticences of the written word to postpone the identification of his [or her] own socially fractional position and give time (a breathing space on the page) for ampler sympathies to be felt’.<sup>102</sup> In Charlotte’s case, however, this freedom may only be ‘a small, an equivocal freedom, it only exists provisionally and in relation to the Prince’s encompassing larger one; but for a moment Charlotte is able to find a paradoxical self-possession in the very naming of her helplessness’.<sup>103</sup> This breathing space enables not only a ‘naming’ but an intoning, and the limited freedom it connotes operates by anticipating retrospect, by making a memory in advance.

The ‘breathing space’ was a phrase frequently used by James,<sup>104</sup> one which he might have derived from a different Tennyson poem, ‘Locksley Hall’, whose importance for tone was demonstrated in the previous chapter.<sup>105</sup> For James, the ‘breathing space’ facilitates a paradoxical relation between termination and continuity, as suggested by a passage in *The American Scene* when James describes a visit to Lake Chocorua in New Hampshire, where William had a summer house:

Each surface of this sort is a sort of breathing-space in the large monotony; the rich recurrence of water gives a polish to the manner itself, so to speak, of nature; thanks to which, in any case, the memory of a characteristic perfection

---

<sup>102</sup> Griffiths, *Printed*, p. 66.

<sup>103</sup> Hadley, p. 163.

<sup>104</sup> James wonders whether anything like the thrill felt upon receiving Thackeray’s works in an ‘orange-covered earlier Cornhill’ is possible for his ‘deafened generation, a generation so smothered in quantity and number that discrimination, under the gasp, has neither air to breathe nor room to turn around’ (*NSBMY*: 20). Thackeray’s published works possessed an ‘audibility that was as the accent of good company’ (*NSBMY*: 20-21), and every ‘product of the press’ created ‘room to breathe and to show in, margin for the casting of its nets’ (*NSBMY*: 22). New York similarly lacks ‘quiet tones, blest breathing-spaces’ in conversation and architecture alike (*AS*: 95).

<sup>105</sup> For Tennyson’s speaker, the ideal of industrial progress means nothing if he is unable to reap the passion of youth: ‘There the passions cramped no longer shall have scope and breathing space’ (ll.167), in *Selected Poems*, p. 191. *In Memoriam* also expresses the desire for one final parting before becoming unrecognisable to each other and ourselves as a ‘landing-place, to clasp and say, / “Farewell!”’ (ll.12-16), in *ibid.*, p. 391. The ‘landing-place’ signifies at once an arrival and a departure, a point emphasised by Tennyson’s annotation of these lines: ‘into the Universal Soul, Love asks to have at least one more parting before we lose ourselves’, in *ibid.*, p. 390 n.

attaches, I find, to certain hours of declining day spent, in a shallow cove, on a fallen log, by the scarce-heard splash of the largest liquid expanse under Chocorua; a situation interfused with every properest item of sunset and evening star, of darkening circle of forest, of boat that, across the water, put noiselessly out – of analogy, in short, with every typical triumph of the American landscape “school,” now as rococo as so many squares of ingenious wool-work, but the remembered delight of our childhood. (*AS*: 18)

The ‘declining day’ hovers beyond the literal, as though it postponed the termination of an entire age. On ‘terra firma’ there is little guarantee that some object ‘cruelly at variance with the glamour of the landscape school may not “put out”’ (*AS*: 18), whereas on the water, the boat ‘puts out from the cove of romance, from the inlet of poetry’ (*AS*: 18). It ‘puts out’ from an ‘inlet of poetry’ in a literal as well as figurative sense too, not just because James has just recollected W.C. Bryant’s lyric on ‘the immortalizable water-fowl’ (*AS*: 18),<sup>106</sup> or even because of the pervasively Wordsworthian idiom of encircling ‘interfusion’,<sup>107</sup> a word which reverberates through James’s own writing and which itself characterises the dense allusiveness of this passage.<sup>108</sup> The passage also ‘puts out’ from the ‘inlet of poetry’ because ‘sunset

---

<sup>106</sup> William Cullen Bryant’s ‘To the Waterfowl’ (1815) insists upon the extensibility of God in nature, *Poems* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1836), pp. 266-67.

<sup>107</sup>

a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean, and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man, (ll.96-100)

‘Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey’ in *William Wordsworth: The Major Works*, ed. by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984; 2008), pp. 131-35 (p. 134). My thanks to Adrian Poole for highlighting the Wordsworthian import of this word to me.

<sup>108</sup> In his essay on Guy de Maupassant, James writes that ‘[e]very good story is of course both a picture and an idea, and the more they are interfused the better the problem is solved’ (*LC2*: 537). Similarly, James describes how the ‘problem of the conflict between idealism and realism’ is ‘so harmoniously interfused’ in Tintoretto’s ‘Last Supper’, that he ‘def[ies] the keenest critic to say where one begins and the other end’, and thus the ‘homeliest prose melts into the most ethereal poetry, and the literal and imaginative fairly confound their identity’ (*TS*: 91-92). Of Venice in general, there is ‘[n]owhere’ where ‘art and life seem as interfused and, as it were, consanguineous’ (*IH*: 25). ‘Consanguineous’ might allude to ‘The

and evening star' alludes to Tennyson's 'Crossing the Bar', a poem where parting also operates as a metaphor for death:

Sunset and evening star,  
And one clear call for me!  
And may there be no moaning of the bar,  
When I put out to sea,

(ll.1-4)<sup>109</sup>

The last words of 'Crossing the Bar' point to the continuity of the self beyond death, to see the Pilot 'face to face' (ll. 15).<sup>110</sup> Tennyson's silent sea, 'too full' for 'sound and foam', infuses James's vignette, with its boat 'put noiselessly out' and stillness broken only by the 'scarce-heard splash' (*AS*: 18). In a nautical context, to 'put out' means to leave port or harbour, and the metaphor of 'putting out' for life after death thus operates on a principle of an extending continuity.<sup>111</sup> For Tennyson, to 'put out' suggests extinction as well as extension, yet the dilation of space in James's passage suggests that 'put out' conveys expanding continuity rather than termination, even as the allusive echoes of their mutual implication are faintly discernible.<sup>112</sup>

James alludes to these lines from 'Crossing the Bar' in *The Golden Bowl*, when we read how Maggie and Adam, daughter and father, must give each other up.

---

Prelude' (II: Schoolltime) where Wordsworth describes how the 'infant Babe' (ll.237) is 'no outcast, bewildered and depressed' because '[a]long his infant veins are interfused / The gravitation and the filial bond/ Of Nature that connect him with the world' (ll.262-64), in *Major Works*, p. 398-99. James may be thinking of this passage when he apologises to his nephew for his controversial revisions to his brother's letters in the 'Family Book': 'I have to the last point the instinct and the sense for fusions and interrelations, for framing and encircling (as I think I have already called it) every part of my stuff in every other – and that makes a danger when the frame and circle play over too much upon the image' (*HJL* IV: 803).

<sup>109</sup> 'Crossing the Bar', in *Selected Poems*, pp. 665-66.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 666.

<sup>111</sup> Guy Domville says to Lieutenant George Round "I put out, like you, this summer – but I haven't come to port" (*CP*: 503).

<sup>112</sup> Tennyson stipulated that this poem should be 'put' at the end of all his editions: '[m]ind you put my *Crossing the Bar* at the end of all editions of my poems', in *Selected Poems*, p. 665.



Because she cannot be a daughter as well as a wife, this renunciation is presented as though it were a kind of death necessary in order to preserve one union over another. They are in effect the last words ever spoken between them as father and daughter, and *must* be the last if they are to become, in their respective marriages, husband and wife. Maggie has just confessed her love for Amerigo, stating that when you love in the deepest way you are beyond even jealousy (GB: 473-74). Adam replies by saying that he does not think that he has ever been jealous, to which Maggie adds that “[n]othing can pull *you* down” (GB: 475). Indefatigable, they thus make “a pair”, Adam says, adding “[w]e’re all right” (GB: 475). Maggie responds with a drama of discrimination:

“Oh, we’re all right!” A declaration launched not only with all her discriminating emphasis, but confirmed by her rising with decision and standing there as if the object of their small excursion required accordingly no further pursuit. At this juncture, however – with the act of their crossing the bar, to get, as might be, into port – there occurred the only approach to a betrayal of their having had to beat against the wind. (GB: 475)

If Maggie’s declaration is heard as insisting “*we’re* all right”, it discriminates that others (such as Amerigo and Charlotte) may not be. It also potentially discriminates that it is precisely their ‘rightness’ that is the problem (“[o]h, we’re all *right!*”), since it is her union with Adam that will have to be renounced. This discrimination is ‘launched’, a metaphor which grows into the allusion to Tennyson’s ‘Crossing the Bar’. They have ‘put out’, but like Guy Domville, have not yet reached port because Adam has not yet made the requisite sacrifice of agreeing to sail away to America with Charlotte. This is only achieved at the end of the chapter:

“I believe in you more than anyone.”

“Than anyone at all?”

She hesitated, for all it might mean; but there was – oh a thousand times! – no doubt of it. “Than anyone at all.” She kept nothing of it back now, met his eyes over it, let him have the whole of it; after which she went on: “And that’s the way, I think, you believe in me.”

He looked at her a minute longer, but his tone at last was right. “About the way – yes.”

“Well, then – ?” She spoke as for the end and for other matters – for anything, everything, else there might be. They would never return to it. (*GB*: 482)

Adam’s ‘tone at last was right’, bestowing upon these words a finality (‘as for the end’) as well as the equanimity of restraint (‘for anything, everything else there might be’). The success of Adam’s sacrifice thus depends upon tone for its moral success, and the tone is what makes this exchange a successful termination. For Martha Nussbaum, Adam ‘would not have loved [Maggie] as well had he not spoken so well, with these words at this time and in his tone of voice’.<sup>113</sup> Tone is thus essential for ‘moral communication’, which must be more than a ‘matter of the uttering and receiving of general propositional judgements’, closing the gap between ‘action and description’; ‘[h]ere to sacrifice in the wrong words with the wrong tone of voice at the wrong time would be worse, perhaps, than not sacrificing at all.’<sup>114</sup> Nussbaum’s conception of ‘rightness’ is, broadly speaking, Aristotelian: tone for her demonstrates how rightness is not inherent or abstract, but depends upon a response made “‘at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right aim, and in the right way, is what is appropriate and best, and this is characteristic of excellent’”.<sup>115</sup> We might add that, as well as sharing this Aristotelian emphasis, ‘rightness’ also carries the Ruskinian sense that a discriminating care for the delineations of tone might itself constitute a moral activity “‘wholly right’” (*LCI*: 892).

To fail to speak with the correct tone thus postpones the release of closure, and this is particularly clear earlier in the second book when the Prince and Princess return home in their carriage from the Verver’s house in Eaton Square. Maggie’s

---

<sup>113</sup> Martha Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 154.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 153, 154, 156.

<sup>115</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (1106b21-23), cited in Nussbaum, p. 156.

efforts to redistribute social relations are articulated by her suggestion that Amerigo should go away with her father, leaving her alone to work on Charlotte. For Maggie, Amerigo can only ‘safely’ agree to this, should Adam ask him, because it is a proposal Amerigo knows Adam’s modesty will not allow him to make. Amerigo’s resistance to Maggie’s attempted reconfiguration then represents a turning point in their relation, one that hinges upon the intonation of the word ‘safely’:

She couldn’t have narrated afterwards – and in fact was at a loss to tell herself – by what transition, what rather marked abruptness of change in their personal relation, their drive came to its end with a kind of interval established, almost confessed to, between them. She felt it in the tone with which he repeated, after her, “Safely’ – ?” (*GB*: 333)

The repetition of “‘Safely’” unsettlingly presumes a violence in advance, and this ‘superstition of not “hurting”’ represents the ‘last word of their conscientious development’ (*GB*: 112). When Amerigo says that he must strike Adam as unlikely to wish him ill, Maggie hears ‘the note already sounded, the note of the felt need of not working harm!’ (*GB*: 332-33). Maggie then becomes her own auditor after she ‘had echoed in this intensity of thought Amerigo’s last words’:

“You’re the last person in the world to wish to do anything to hurt him.”

She heard herself, heard her tone, after she had spoken, and heard it the more that, for a minute after, she felt her husband’s eyes on her face, very close, too close for her to see him. (*GB*: 333)

The prince eventually agrees to go away with Adam, but on condition that he ask Charlotte to ask Adam, a condition that sounds to Maggie like a defeat.

He had answered her, just before, distinctly, and it appeared to leave her nothing to say. It was almost as if, having planned for the last word, she saw him himself enjoying it (*GB*: 334-35).

To have the last word, in this scene, is to gain the upper hand, and their respective struggle to achieve that end, the ‘interval established, almost confessed to, between them’, is audible in Amerigo’s ‘tone’.

Maggie will have to wait until the novel’s last words to achieve her last word, a resolution upon which the possibilities of marital salvation depend:

“Isn’t she too splendid?” she simply said, offering it to explain and to finish.

“Oh, splendid!” With which he came over to her.

“That’s our help, you see,” she added – to point further her moral.

It kept him before her therefore, taking in – or trying to – what she so wonderfully gave. He tried, too clearly, to please her – to meet her in her own way; but with the result only that, close to her, her face kept before him, his hands holding her shoulders, his whole act enclosing her, he presently echoed: “‘See’? I see nothing but *you*.” (GB: 548).

A ‘great deal of weight in the interpretation of *The Golden Bowl* must fall on its ending’, Marianna Torgovnick argues, since ‘it is not only the final scene in the novel, and thus the reader’s final view of characters and action, but also the “end,” or goal, of Maggie’s efforts’.<sup>116</sup> For most readers, the Prince’s final words confirm Maggie’s triumph:

Maggie has saved her marriage, rekindled her husband’s passion, banished her rival, protected her father, and negotiated the perilous transition from innocence to experience. No Jamesian heroine accomplishes more.<sup>117</sup>

However, the extent to which these last words represent Maggie’s triumph depends upon the tone with which they are heard, something critics have not tended to consider.<sup>118</sup> We might at first be troubled by the potential indifference of “‘See?’”, as

---

<sup>116</sup> Marianna Torgovnick, *Closure in the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 143.

<sup>117</sup> Stephen D. Arata, ‘Object Lessons: Reading the Museum in *The Golden Bowl*’, in Alison Booth, *Famous Last Words: Changes in Gender & Narrative Closure*, ed. by Alison Booth (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993), pp. 199-229 (p. 199).

<sup>118</sup> David M. Craig discusses the ending primarily in terms of imagery, and tone is only described in terms of a general atmosphere: ‘[t]one is perhaps most important in these

though Amerigo has not learnt as much as he should have. This final utterance (“‘I see nothing but *you*’”) might convey a resolved equilibrium, as though Maggie and Amerigo repeat each other’s words back and forth as a way of moving closer together.<sup>119</sup> However, “‘*you*’” fixes Maggie in the totality of his gaze at the same time as it makes Charlotte present by discriminating her absence. Amerigo’s cliché of romance wavers between generosity and isolation. Even in the novel’s closing pages, when Charlotte Stant has gone away with Adam her husband, Maggie’s father, leaving Maggie and Amerigo, at long last, alone with each other, everything is not as it should be. As Maggie buries her eyes in the breast of her Prince, they are brought together only by being held apart. There might be very little difference between holding your lover in your arms and holding them at arm’s length. And in this intimation of resistance is audible the awkwardness of resolution, even and especially when the greatest possibilities for triumphant salvation are invoked. As was suggested in relation to the novel’s actual last words at the start of this thesis, these lines are constitutively equivocal, withholding explicit cues for the voice, and leaving breathing space for a variety of possible voicings.

For James, tone would always have the last word. At the end of *The Sacred Fount*, after the narrator’s exorbitant theorising collapses, Grace Brissenden claims that, according to her husband, the woman the narrator has been trying to identify is Lady John, rather than May Server. With her overwhelmingly ‘supreme assurance, the presentation of her own now finished system’, she adds “[m]y poor dear, you *are* crazy, and I bid you good-night!” (SF 316). The narrator grows conscious ‘that

---

interviews for James’s concern is not with the ending that the characters construct, but with the state of consciousness that creates and experiences this ending’, ‘The Indeterminacy’, 141; Gabriel Pearson notes in passing the ‘almost ritual stress’ of the novel’s ‘last phrase’ which conveys that we have entered into the ‘presence of James’s final things’, ‘The Novel’, in *The Air of Reality*, ed. by Goode, p. 301.

<sup>119</sup> Dorothea Krook sees ‘the cover of manners’ as an ‘insistence on equilibrium, the preservation of decorum’ in her redemptive reading of these last words, p. 318. This responds to R.P. Blackmur’s previous reading of these lines as the depiction of a ‘shade embracing a shade, but in the shades of poetry’ contributing to the ‘break-down’ of the Prince, Charlotte, and Adam, ‘Introduction’ to *The Golden Bowl*, in Makowsky, ed., pp. 147-60 (p. 160).

her verdict lingered', and her last word becomes something from which he has to escape, marking a point of no return.

She had so had the last word that, to get out of its planted presence, I shook myself, as I had done before, from my thought. When once I had started to my room indeed – and to preparation for a livelier start as soon as the house should stir again – I almost breathlessly hurried. Such a last word – the word that put me altogether nowhere – was too unacceptable not to prescribe afresh that prompt test of escape to other air for which I had earlier in the evening seen so much reason. I *should* certainly never again, on the spot, quite hang together, even though it wasn't really that I hadn't three times her method. What I too fatally lacked was her tone. (*SF*: 316)

If *The Golden Bowl* is deemed 'the novel to end all novels', then *The Sacred Fount* is normally categorised as perhaps the strangest of James's experiments, despite their shared investment in concealed love affairs from the perspective of an observing commentator. Like *The Golden Bowl*, for many readers of *The Sacred Fount* the weight of interpretation comes down to its final sentence, and in particular the interpretation of Grace Brissenden's 'tone'. For Sergio Perosa, the appeal to tone indicates the inability of language to 'impose an exhaustive and conclusive order on the contrasting data and suggestions of experience'.<sup>120</sup> For others, the narrator's fatal lack of tone confirms the unreliability of the narrator, thereby confirming the narrator's investigation as an obsessive fantasy that is, at the last, demonstrated to be crazy.<sup>121</sup> For Hutchison, the 'concluding line is, characteristically, inconclusive', and the 'only way to escape the riddle is to admit that he is wrong – there is no riddle from which to escape'.<sup>122</sup> In contrast, Heath Moon argues that Mrs Brissenden's tone is the final move in an extended attempt to 'throw the narrator into confusion' as he tries to ascertain the nature of her relationship with Long and their 'mutually

---

<sup>120</sup> Perosa, p. 78.

<sup>121</sup> See for instance Leon Edel, 'Introduction' to *The Sacred Fount* (New York: New Directions, 1983), pp. 3-16; Edmund Wilson, *The Triple Thinkers: Twelve Essays on Literary Subjects* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 99.

<sup>122</sup> Hutchison, *Seeing*, pp. 68, 56.

protective vampirism'.<sup>123</sup> This culminates in her suggestion that Mrs Brissenden's husband told her, in confidence, that Long's lover is Lady John, which exposes Mrs Brissenden's 'inconsistency' in a way that self-interestedly preserves the interests of the leisure class; 'the rhetorical struggle draws to its fitting conclusion' and 'power ultimately becomes a thing of such ectoplasm ("tone") that appropriating it escapes the reach of moral claim [sic]'.<sup>124</sup> To understand tone in this way is to understand it as a kind of screen, defending the parasitical upper-class lifestyle, and thus, as Moon suggests, 'saves' the novel from Modernism's over-emphasis on the unreliable narrator and reclaims instead a focus on social decorum, class, and identity.<sup>125</sup>

Whilst this dismissal of tone as ectoplasmic fails to acknowledge the way that tone tests claims of morality in some of the most significant exchanges in James's writing, it nevertheless recognises that James might not be wholly damning the narrator by drawing attention to his fatal lack of tone and Mrs Brissenden's mastery of the last word. When James wrote to Mrs Humphry Ward on 15 March 1901, in response to her comment that the last word should carry a more optimistic note (what, for instance, becomes of May Server's happiness?), he replies that the 'Ford Obert evidence' (*HJL* IV: 185), namely the impression that May Server appears greatly improved, 'supplies the motive' for Mrs Brissenden's 'terror' and her 're-nailing down of the coffin', a coffin in which Mrs Server and Brissenden are figuratively buried (*HJL* IV: 185-86). The force of the 'tone' in 'Mrs B.'s last interview' thus reveals the lengths she will go in dealing with those who might compromise her desire, which consists in 'an ironic exposure of her own false plausibility, of course' (*HJL* IV: 185-86).

James's 1897 review of George Sand's letters to Alfred de Musset describes her mastery of tone as contributing to her unrivalled 'command of the last word'

---

<sup>123</sup> Heath Moon, 'Saving James from Modernism: How to Read *The Sacred Fount*', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 49:2 (1988), 120-41 (137).

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 137-38.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

(*LC2*: 752).<sup>126</sup> Tone provides a kind of antidote to the threat to life, operating as a kind of escape act:

By a solution I mean a secret for saving not only your reputation but your life – that of your soul; an antidote to dangers which the unendowed can hope to escape by no process less uncomfortable or less inglorious than that of prudence and precautions [...] So much, I repeat, does there appear to be in a tone. (*LC2*: 753)

For Martha Nussbaum, the sacrifice Adam makes to his daughter by going away to America with Charlotte ‘is in itself no solution. For it to become a solution it has to be offered in the right way at the right time in the right tone, in such a way that she can take it.’<sup>127</sup> Because it represents a mortification of methodology, the tone of Mrs Brissenden’s last word does not provide a ‘solution’ in the sense of a problem solved, as in James’s story of that name, ‘The Solution’ (1889-1890). Rather, her tone is a ‘solution’ in the sense of holding competing elements in suspense, and it is this that enables her to preserve her life-source – if not her plausibility, for the alert reader.

---

<sup>126</sup> ‘We feel it, I hasten to add, this last word, in all her letters: the occasion, no matter which, gathers it from her as the breeze gathers the scent from the garden. It is always the last word of sympathy and sense, and we meet it on every page of the voluminous “Correspondance”’ (*LC2*: 752-53).

<sup>127</sup> Nussbaum, p. 150.



## Coda

Imagine someone who had never heard English spoken trying to establish what was meant by the written sign 'Oh'; there is much the voice can do with a sound we write like that.

Eric Griffiths

There are many aspects of the subject of intonation in Henry James which this thesis has not had the space to address, and yet which might be developed further. Aside from extending these arguments to include an even broader range of James's works, the relation between intonation and prose rhythm in James's writing would add much to our understanding of James's auditive intelligence.<sup>1</sup> The field of prose rhythm was burgeoning towards the end of James's own career,<sup>2</sup> and frequently draws on him for its examples.<sup>3</sup> However, it still represents something of an 'unexplored aesthetic',<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Rhythm provides an underlying hierarchical structure upon which stress is built, while intonation components are associated with the high points of these rhythmic hierarchies', Wennerstrom, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, George Herbert Palmer, 'Hexameters and Rhythmic Prose', *Atlantic Monthly*, 66 (1890), 526-34; E. Hale Jr., 'Poetic Rhythms in Prose', *The Atlantic Monthly*, 78 (1896), 227-32. See also: John Chapman, 'Clause-Length in English Prose', *Dublin Review*, 158 (1916), 346-52; Pieter Fihn Van Draat, *Rhythm in English Prose* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1910); 'The Place of an Adverb: A Study of Rhythm', *Neophilologus*, 6 (1921), 56-88; Finley M. K. Foster, 'Cadence in English Prose', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 16 (1917), 456-62; Olive Savage, *Rhythm in Prose Illustrated from Authors of the Nineteenth Century* (London: University College, 1917).

<sup>3</sup> Abram Lipskey characterises the shift from *Watch and Ward* to *The Ambassadors* as one from duple to triple rhythm, *Rhythm as a Distinguishing Characteristic of Prose Style* (New York: The Science Press, 1907), pp. 14-15. He subsequently identifies the difference between 'Henry James' and other writers (Gibbon, Macaulay, Barrie) by 'virtue of something which can only be described as rhythm', 'Rhythm in Prose', *Sewanee Review*, 16 (1908), 277-89 (279-80). William Morrison Patterson's experimental account of the differences in our perception of rhythm cites James's insistence on refusing the 'withheld tests' of silent reading in the 'Preface' to *The Golden Bowl*, in *The Rhythms of Prose* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1917), p. 2. Oliver Elton analyses a passage from *The Golden Bowl* (GB: 111-12) using quantitative scansion methods, *English Prose Numbers* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1922), pp. 40-41. D.W. Harding later draws on Saintsbury's account of prose rhythm to describe the 'clinching effect' prepared by James's 'long preparatory delays' in *The Wings of the Dove*, in *Words into Rhythm: English Speech Rhythm in Verse and Prose* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 137-38.

<sup>4</sup> Vidyan Ravinthiran makes this comment in relation to Hopkins's comments on prose style, 'The Spontaneity of Hopkins's Journal Prose', *The Review of English Studies*, 64 (2012), 838-56 (840).

partly as a result of the numerous problems it is yet to negotiate adequately.<sup>5</sup> But, if a detailed account of prose rhythm has been absent from this thesis, it is only because intonation has been so frequently absent from accounts of prose rhythm. Saintsbury's *A History of English Prose Rhythm* not only 'risks unwarranted metrification', especially problematic when this metrification is quantitative in kind, but it just as (if not more) significantly 'pays no heed to effects of pitch and intonation'.<sup>6</sup>

A number of these early twentieth-century studies of prose rhythm cite William James as well as Henry James, noting the former's claim that rhythm and emphasis are a determining element of consciousness.<sup>7</sup> Additional research into the philosophical implications of intonation would develop the formulation of the 'auditive intelligence' further. For instance, in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), William sought to overcome the opposition between expression and experience, between sceptical 'Sensationalism' on the one hand, and dogmatic 'Intellectualism' on the other, by arguing that there is no 'inflection of voice, in human speech, that does not actually express some shading or other of relation which we at some moment actually feel to exist between the larger objects of our thought' (*Principles I*: 245). 'Shades' of verbal 'colouring' are themselves part of experience, and cannot be dismissed as either their successor (Sensationalism) or antecedent (Intellectualism).

---

<sup>5</sup> Fred Newton Scott even went so far as to proclaim, in 1905, that the 'tune of prose' is not only 'highly complex and elusive', but to 'attempt to analyze it is to court disaster', 'The Scansion of Prose Rhythm', *Modern Language Association*, 20 (1905), 707–28 (707). In 1913, Albert C. Clark complained that the 'most disconcerting feature' of Saintsbury's account of prose rhythm is 'the lack of positive results. He professes himself unable to give any rules by which fine effects are to be attained, "any prose-forms corresponding to the recognized forms of verse"'; for Clark, because prose rhythm is only ever understood as *not* verse, it is very hard to identify what prose rhythm is, Saintsbury, *Prose Rhythm*, p. 224, in *Prose Rhythm in English* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Ravinthiran, 841.

<sup>7</sup> Lipskey cites William James to argue for rhythm as a constituent element of thought (*Principles I*: 284), in *Rhythm as a Distinguishing*, pp. 4, 30. In 'Rhythm and Prose', Lipskey also notes that 'phrase, clause and sentence rhythm corresponds to the beat of thought itself, for, as a great psychologist says', and cites the same passage, 'Rhythm in Prose', 280. William Morrison Patterson also cites the same passage (*Principles I*: 284), to suggest that rhythm is a determining element of consciousness itself, *The Rhythms of Prose* (1916), p. 16.

For the ‘radical’, as opposed to the ‘primary’, empiricist, the relations between the minutiae of expression, which include but are not limited to vocal tones, are as related to ‘the larger objects of our thought’ as the relations between objects ‘*in rerum natura*’ (*Principles* I: 245). To omit these shades of emphasis would be to greatly reduce what is accessible to experience; a radical empiricism wants no more than experience, but it wants *no less* than experience either.<sup>8</sup> Rather than representing a merely accidental or supernumerary aspect of intellection, intonation therefore itself facilitates a particular fidelity to those aspects of experience that are most likely to go missing in systematic philosophy such as Kant’s, or ‘primary empiricism’ as represented by Locke and Hume.<sup>9</sup> The implications of this passage have been more recently revived by Bruno Latour, himself drawing on a previous reading of it by Étienne Souriau; for Latour, the emphasis on shades of relation refuses the supposedly unbridgeable chasm between the plurality of representations and the monism of being,<sup>10</sup> what Whitehead calls the ‘bifurcation of nature’ and which Latour elsewhere describes as the phantasmagoria of divided experience which asks us ‘to choose between meaning without reality and reality without meaning’.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Bruno Latour, ‘Reflections on Etienne Souriau’s *Les différents modes d’existence*’, in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, ed. by Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, Graham Harman (Melbourne: Re.press, 2011), pp. 304–33 (p. 306).

<sup>9</sup> William elsewhere argues that a ‘reader incapable of understanding four ideas in the book he is reading aloud can nevertheless read it with the most delicately modulated expression of intelligence’ (*Principles* I: 253–54). Steven Meyer challenges this separation between intonation and understanding, noting that if William James’s ‘sentence turned out to possess an entirely unfamiliar shape – had it been, for instance, one of the “delicately modulated” long sentences of the late novels of William’s brother Henry, [...] then the grammar would presumably have served to *prevent* a properly accented first reading’, *Irresistible Dictation: Gertrude Stein and the Correlations of Writing and Science* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 297.

<sup>10</sup> Bruno Latour, ‘Reflections’, p. 306.

<sup>11</sup> Bruno Latour, ‘Nature at the Cross-Roads: The Bifurcation of Nature and its End’, in *What is the Style of Matters of Concern? Two Lectures in Empirical Philosophy* (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 2008), pp. 9–26 (p. 26). Some of the implications of William’s refusal to separate audition from thinking might also be developed with the help of recent advances in the field of so-called ‘cognitive-phenomenology’; see Galen Strawson, ‘Cognitive Phenomenology: Real Life’, in *Cognitive Phenomenology*, ed. by Tim Bayne and Michelle Montague (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 285–25.

More attention might also be paid to what might be described as ‘sound syllables’ in James’s writing, the kinds of meaning carried by semantically impoverished words such as ‘Ah’, and ‘Oh’ as a consequence of their sounding. When little Bilham exclaims “[a]h, ah, ah!” it ‘reminded [Strether] of Miss Barrace, and he felt again the brush of his sense of moving in a maze of mystic, closed allusions’ (*CFHJ* XVIII: 175-76), providing another instance of ability of tone to challenge Strether’s discriminatory powers as he loses his way, in Mary Cross’s words, within a network of ‘poetic cross-referencing’.<sup>12</sup> For David Lodge, this creates a kind of ‘in-group game which consists in managing to discuss, or at least to suggest, infinite complexities and discriminations’, and where the ‘expressive force’ given ‘to platitudes and dead metaphors’ is derived from ‘intonation, stress, placing and repetition’.<sup>13</sup>

One famous example of such ‘expressive force’ occurs in *The Wings of the Dove* when Lord Mark is first introduced to Merton Densher:

“I don’t know whether you know Lord Mark.” And then for the other party: “Mr Merton Densher – who has just come back from America.”

“Oh!” said the other party, while Densher said nothing – occupied as he mainly was on the spot with weighing the sound in question. He recognized it in a moment as less imponderable than it might have appeared, as having indeed positive claims. It wasn’t, that is, he knew the “Oh!” of the idiot, however great the superficial resemblance: it was that of the clever, the accomplished man; it was the very specialty of the speaker, and a deal of expensive training and experience had gone into producing it. Densher felt somehow that, as a thing of value accidentally picked up, it would retain an interest of curiosity. (*WD* 296)

‘There would be much to say about “Oh!” in James’, writes J. Hillis Miller, the most extensive commentator on Lord Mark’s syllable.<sup>14</sup> The novel is so ‘punctuated by

---

<sup>12</sup> Cross, p. 58.

<sup>13</sup> David Lodge, ‘Strether by the River’, in *The Language of Fiction: Essays in Criticism and Verbal Analysis* (Oxford: Routledge; repr. 2001), pp. 189-213 (p. 197).

<sup>14</sup> J. Hillis Miller, *Versions of Pygmalion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1900), p. 248 n.16. See also Ricks, *Prejudice*, p. 164.

crucial confrontations pivoting on “Oh!” that it might almost be said that learning to read this novel means learning to read “Oh!”<sup>15</sup> Later on, Lord Mark says ““Oh”” again (which Densher thinks is pointedly directed at him) and we are told by the narrator that ‘again it was just as good’ (*WD*: 297). Densher tries and fails to imitate Lord Mark’s ““Oh!””, ‘with a sound like his lordship’s own’ (*WD*: 298). When Milly subsequently receives a visiting card from Densher in the presence of Lord Mark, the latter employs just the same economy of expression: ““Oh!” said Lord Mark – in a manner that, making it resound through the great, cool hall, might have carried it even to Densher’s ear as a judgement of his identity heard and noted once before’ (*WD*: 387).

Miller concludes the following:

“Oh!” in one sense means nothing: it has no semantic content. On the other hand, it serves an indispensable function: it may be a means of expressing or at any rate indicating the inexpressible, the ‘unspeakable’. This inexpressible that nevertheless gets expressed by the “Oh!” may be what in another person is truly “other,” or it may be something “other” than any person, for example the absolute otherness of death.<sup>16</sup>

““Oh”” is understood to refer to ‘expressing or at any rate indicating the inexpressible, the “unspeakable”’. But these two things are often very different: the ‘unspeakable’ can be very specific indeed, as when everyone knows what something is, but no one will say it (social decorum often creates such moments). The inexpressible, by contrast, might be something no one knows, and everyone knows that they do not know it (mysticism, perhaps). The extent to which Milly is exploited by Kate and Merton might be ‘unspeakable’ in the sense that it is the product of a treachery too insidious to articulate, but ‘inexpressibility’ might be altogether

---

<sup>15</sup> Hillis Miller, p. 248 n.16. Perhaps most poignantly, when Kate says she will renounce Milly’s money and marry Densher if he promises he is not in love with Milly’s memory, Densher responds ““Oh – her memory!”” (*WD*: 576). For Kate, this single ““Oh – ”” ‘means they will never be again as they were and separates them forever’, Hillis Miller, p. 248 n.16.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

different, indicating for instance the kinds of things we can think but not know. Leaving aside how something not explicitly articulable by one person could be equivalent to the unreachable otherness of all, Hillis Miller's appeal to the apophatic derives from a Derridean commitment to '*le tout autre*', hence the slippage into the truly 'Other', death, and the assumption that "'Oh'" represents a failure of communication symptomatic of language more generally. Hillis Miller confidently asserts that 'the relation between text and context does not exist as a physical relation (say a relation of material causality), but as a textual or a sign to sign relation',<sup>17</sup> or alternatively that the 'study of the relations of literature to history and society is part of rhetoric'.<sup>18</sup> Lord Mark's "'Oh'", consequently, can only ever be understood as that which interrupts meaning which is only ever linguistically generated.

Perhaps the definitive critical statement on 'Oh' in English Literature, a 1988 lecture by the British poet J.H. Prynne on 'English Poetry and Emphatical Language', also insists upon the vacuity of this syllable.<sup>19</sup> 'Oh' poses particular difficulties for grammarians and lexicographers alike because it is by no means clear what part of speech it is. Indeed, to call it an 'interjection' is really just to say it cannot be classified, hence 'English grammarians largely treated the interjection as an anomalous category'.<sup>20</sup> 'Oh' is one of those 'purely emotive words which do not enter into syntactical relations',<sup>21</sup> 'not a word at all',<sup>22</sup> or 'incapable by itself' of 'expressing a thought completely',<sup>23</sup> or exhibiting a vague "'passion of the mind'".<sup>24</sup> 'Both in emotional reference and in grammatical function it seems locked

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>19</sup> J. H. Prynne, 'English Poetry and Emphatical Language: Wharton Lecture on English Poetry', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 74 (1988), 135-69.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 140 n.15.

<sup>21</sup> Randolph Quirk, and others, *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (London: Longman, 1985), pp. 74, 88, 853. Cited in Prynne, 140 n.15.

<sup>22</sup> The Spanish Renaissance grammarian Sanctius, cited in Ian Michael, *English Grammatical Categories and the Tradition to 1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 81. Cited in Prynne, 166 n. 94.

<sup>23</sup> George Philip Krapp, *Elements of English Grammar* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> Michael, *Grammatical Categories*, pp. 76-81, cited in Prynne, 140 n.15.

unconstruably into the interiority of the uttering subject',<sup>25</sup> and Prynne notes that Georg Lukács might have objected to 'Oh' on the basis that it evinces a 'nostalgia for an entirely efficacious vocalizing of social feeling that always constructs an imaginary space void of obstacles'.<sup>26</sup> Yet for Prynne, such objections also contribute to its singular power: 'Oh' is 'an extraordinary powerful word, for all the vacancy of the efforts to give it lexical definition and perhaps, in some large measure, precisely because of that vacancy'.<sup>27</sup>

Like Hillis Miller, for Prynne, 'Oh' both means nothing and serves an indispensable function. Like Hillis Miller too, Prynne's essay does not account for the role of tone. As Griffiths reminds us, 'there is much the voice can do' with a word like "'Oh'" because like "'Yes'" and "'No'", or "'true'" and "'false'", it 'is barely a word at all and so has no semantic content apart from its sounding'.<sup>28</sup> The semantic vacuity of 'Oh' thus especially foregrounds the paralinguistic effects of the voice. For Christopher Ricks, it is tone which makes 'Oh' 'pregnant with potentiality',<sup>29</sup> and *The Wings of the Dove* shows 'just how full, how unvacuous, the little word "Oh" could be made by a practiced European, even while seeming to be almost nothing'.<sup>30</sup> The fullness of Lord Mark's tone consists in its calibrated carelessness that conceals the history of a 'great deal of expensive training and experience' which has gone into producing it. His "'Oh'" resembles a kind of *bibilot* or *objet trouvé*, possessing a symbolic capital irreducible to economic exchange.<sup>31</sup> For Densher, this represents a kind of aristocratic snub whilst for Milly, earlier in the

---

<sup>25</sup> Prynne, 140.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 145. This adapts Georg Lukács's criticisms of lyric poetry, see *The Theory of the Novel*, trans. by Anna Bostock (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1971), p. 63. Cited in Prynne, 139.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>28</sup> Griffiths, *Printed*, p. 19.

<sup>29</sup> 'James had been a citizen of a country which has a national anthem beginning with O or Oh', and 'Oh and Ah and Eh', Ricks, *Prejudice*, p. 161.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 164

<sup>31</sup> James will later revise the phrase 'a thing of value accidentally picked up' in *The Ivory Tower* when Gray undergoes the sensation of being a "'piece", an object of value accidently picked' by Mr Betterman (*IT*: 109).

novel, Lord Mark possesses ‘such a voice, such a tone and such a manner’ (*WD*: 131) that he resembles ‘one of those cases she had heard of at home – those characteristic cases of people in England who concealed their play of mind so much more than they showed it’ (*WD*: 126).

For one of James’s earliest readers, this ““Oh”” exceeds the paralinguistic repertoire of the English theatrical tradition: ‘Lord Burleigh’s nod was nothing in point of significance to Lord Mark’s “Oh!”’<sup>32</sup> This word that is barely a word at all, Lecercle and Riley note, is ‘one element of the sentence that traditional linguistics, and the philosophy of language that underpins it, will not account for’.<sup>33</sup> This is why Lord Mark’s ““Oh”” crystallises many elements outlined in this thesis: it is another one of those tones that might in itself contain a complete drama, just as, in ‘The Parisian Stage’, the ‘concentrated timorous prudence of the abbé’s “*Oh! non!*”’ in Edmond Got’s 1872 performance of Alfred de Musset’s *Il ne Faut Jurer de Rien* constitutes ‘a master-stroke; it depicts a lifetime’ (*CWAD2*: 6). Densher’s own analysis, moreover, demonstrates his own certain discriminatory intelligence: the vocal production was ‘less imponderable than it might have appeared’ and it ‘wasn’t [...] the “Oh!” of the idiot’. Whilst Lord Mark’s ““Oh”” stops short of preserving a life or resisting time, it nevertheless possesses a peculiar staying power; ““Oh”” bears the metacommunicative weight of prior vocalisations like a leitmotif or the statement of a musical key, one to which James keeps returning. For Densher, this tone will ‘retain an interest of curiosity’, just as Emerson’s voice made James realise that ‘human tone *could*, in that independent and original way, be interesting’ (*NSBMY*: 165).

---

<sup>32</sup> Unsigned Review, ‘Mr Henry James’s Novel’, London *Daily Chronicle*, 29 August (1902), 3, in Hayes, ed., pp. 361-62 (p. 362). William Cecil, Lord Burleigh (1520-1598), was lord treasurer under Queen Elizabeth I, and this allusion refers to Sheridan’s *The Critic* where Burleigh comes on stage and shakes his head because he was too immersed in state affairs to speak.

<sup>33</sup> Jean-Jacques Lecercle and Denise Riley, *The Force of Language* (London: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2004), p. 1.



## Bibliography

- Adorno, Theodor, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2004)
- , *In Search of Wagner*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso, 2005)
- , *Negative Dialectics*, trans. by E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973)
- Alexander, Edward, *Matthew Arnold and John Stuart Mill*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Routledge, 2010)
- Alger, William Rousnesville, *A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life with a Complete Bibliography of the Subject* (Philadelphia: George W. Childs, 1864)
- Althusser, Louis, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)', in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), pp. 85-126
- Arata, Stephen D., 'Object Lessons: Reading the Museum in *The Golden Bowl*', in Alison Booth, *Famous Last Words: Changes in Gender & Narrative Closure*, ed. by Alison Booth (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993), pp. 199-229
- Armstrong, Paul B., *The Phenomenology of Henry James* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017)

- Arnold, Matthew, 'Preface' to Samuel Johnson, in *The Six Chief Lives from Johnsons's Lives of the Poets: With Macaulay's Life of Johnson* (London: Macmillan, 1878), pp. vii-xxv
- , 'The French Play in London', in *English Literature and Irish Politics*, ed. by R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973), pp. 64-85
- , 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time', in *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings* ed. by Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 26-52
- Attridge, John, 'The Milieu Is the Message: Henry James and Mediation', *Writing Medium Machine: Modern Technographies*, ed. by Sean Pryor and David Trotter (London: Open Humanities Press, 2016), pp. 67-83
- Austin, J.L., *How To Do Things With Words*, ed. by J.O. Urmson, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970)
- Banta, Martha, ed., *New Essays on 'The American'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)
- Barthes, Roland, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, trans. by Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977)
- Beer, Gillian, 'Authentic Tidings of Invisible Things', in *Vision in Context: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Sight*, ed. by Teresa Brennan and Martin Jay (Oxford: Routledge, 1966), pp. 83-100
- , *Darwin's Plots*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

- Berman, Jessica, *Modernist Fiction: Cosmopolitanism and the Politics of Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)
- Bersani, Leo, *A Future for Astyanax* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1976)
- Blackmur, R.P., *Studies in Henry James*, ed. by Veronica A. Makowsky (New York: New Directions, 1983)
- Blair, Sara, *Henry James and The Writing of Race and Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
- Blasing, Mutlu, 'Double Focus in *The American*', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 28 (1973), 74-84
- Blassingame, John W., and John R. McKivigan, eds, *The Frederick Douglass Papers: Volume 1, Series One: Speeches, Debates and Interviews, 1841-46* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979)
- Bolinger, Dwight, 'Accent is Predictable (If You're a Mind Reader)', *Language*, 48 (1972), 633-44
- , *Intonation and its Parts: Melody in Spoken English* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985)
- , *Intonation and its Uses* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989)
- , ed., *Intonation: Selected Readings* (Middlesex: Harmondsworth, 1972)
- Booth, Michael R., *Theatre in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

Bosanquet, Theodora, *Henry James at Work* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1924)

Bradbury, Nicola, *Henry James: The Later Novels* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979)

Brodhead, Richard, *The School of Hawthorne* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990)

Brooks, Peter, *Henry James Goes to Paris* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018)

-----, 'The Melodrama of Consciousness', in *Henry James: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Ruth Bernard Yeazell (London: Pearson, 1994), pp. 15-38

-----, 'The Turn of the American', in *New Essays on 'The American'*, ed. by Martha Banta (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 43-68

Browning, Robert, *Browning: Selected Poems*, ed. by John Woolford, Daniel Karlin, and Joseph Phelan (Oxford: Routledge, 2010)

Bruneau, Jean, ed., *Gustave Flaubert: Correspondance*, 5 vols (Paris: ed. de La Pléiade, 1973-2007)

Bryant, William Cullen, *Poems* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1836)

Butler, Judith, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997)

Buzard, James, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to "Culture" 1800-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993)

Cameron, Sharon, *Thinking in Henry James* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989)

Cargill, Oscar, *The Novels of Henry James* (New York: Hafner, 1961)

Caygill, Howard, *Art of Judgement* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989)

Chapman, John, 'Clause-Length in English Prose', *Dublin Review*, 158 (1916), 346–52

Chatman, Seymour, *The Later Style of Henry James* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972)

Christ, Carol T., and John O. Jordan, eds, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995)

Clark, Albert C., *Prose Rhythm in English* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913)

Cohn, Dorrit, "“First Shock of Complete Perception”: The Opening Episode of *The Golden Bowl*, Volume 2', *Henry James Review*, 22.1 (2001), 1–9

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, *Logic*, in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by James Robert de Jager Jackson, 16 vols (London and Princeton: Routledge and Kegan Paul and Princeton University Press, 1971–2001), XIII (1981)

Connor, Steven, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

-----, 'The Modern Auditory I', in *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, ed. by Roy Porter (Oxford: Routledge, 1997), pp. 215–16

Cooper, George Burns, *Mysterious Music: Rhythm and Free Verse* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998)

Cooper, John R., 'Intonation and Iambic Pentameter', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 33.4 (1997), 392-421

Couper-Kuhlen, Elizabeth, and Margret Selting, eds, *Prosody in Conversation: Interactional Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

-----, 'Towards an Interactional Perspective', in *Prosody in Conversation: Interactional Studies*, ed. by Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen and Margaret Selting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp. 11-56

Craig, David M., 'The Indeterminacy of the End: Maggie Verver and the Limits of the Imagination', *Henry James Review*, 2 (1982), 133-44

Crary, Jonathan, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990)

Crews, Frederick, *The Tragedy of Manners: Moral Drama in the Later Novels of Henry James* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957)

Cross, Mary, *Henry James: The Contingencies of Style* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993)

Crystal, David, 'Intonation and Metrical Theory', *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 70.1 (1971), 1-33

-----, *The English Tone of Voice* (London: Edward Arnold, 1975)

Culler, Jonathan, *The Theory of the Lyric* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2017)

-----, 'Introduction' to Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. by Wade Baskin, 2nd edn (London: Fontana-Collins, 1974), pp. xi-xxv

Cureton, Richard, *Rhythmic Phrasing in English Verse* (London: Longman, 1992)

de Goncourt, Edmund and Jules, *Journal de Goncourt: Mémoires de la vie Littéraire*, 9 vols (Paris: G. Charpentier and E. Fasquelle, 1888-96), II (1888)

-----, *Madame Gervaisais* (Paris: Librairie Internationale, 1869)

Derrida, Jacques, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by G. C. Spivak (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976)

Diderot, Denis, *The Paradox of Acting*, trans. by Walter Herries Pollock (London: Chatto and Windus, 1883)

Donoghue, Denis, 'Attitudes Towards History: A Preface to *The Sense of the Past*', *Salmagundi*, 69-9 (1985-1986), 107-24

Douglas-Fairhurst, Robert, *Victorian Afterlives: The Shaping of Influence in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)

Dowling, Linda, *Language and Decadence in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986)

Draat, Fijn Van, 'Rhythm in English Prose' (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1910)

-----, 'The Place of an Adverb: A Study of Rhythm', *Neophilologus*, 6 (1921), 56–88

Dupee, F.W., *Henry James* (New York: Sloane, 1951)

Dwight, H.G., from 'Henry James – "in his own country"', in *Putnam's Monthly*, 2 (1907), 164-70; 433-42, in *Henry James: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Roger Gard (Oxford: Routledge, 1968), pp. 432-49

Edel, Leon, *Henry James: The Treacherous Years, 1895–1901* (Philadelphia and New York: J.B Lippincott Company, 1969)

-----, 'Introduction' to *The Sacred Fount* (New York: New Directions, 1983), pp. 3-16

-----, 'Introduction' to *The Tragic Muse* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), pp. vii-xvii

-----, review of Lyall H. Powers, *Henry James and the Naturalist Movement* (1971), *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 26 (1971-72), 498-99

-----, *The Conquest of London, 1870-1883* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1962)

Edel, Leon, and Lyall H. Powers, eds., *Howells and James: A Double Billing* (New York: New York Public Library, 1958)



Eliot, George, *Middlemarch*, ed. by Rosemary Ashton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965; repr. 2003)

Eliot, T.S., 'A Prediction in Regard to Three English Authors: 1 Writers Who, Though Masters of Thought, are Likewise Masters of Art', *Vanity Fair*, 21.6 (1924), 29, 98, in *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*, ed. by Ronald Schuchard, 8 vols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014-2015), II: *The Perfect Critic*, ed. by Anthony Cuda, and Ronald Schuchard (2014), pp. 513-20

-----, 'Charles Whibley', in *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1932), pp. 454-68

-----, 'In Memory of Henry James' (1918), in *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919-1926*, ed. by Cuda, Anthony, and Schuchard, 8 vols (Johns Hopkins and Faber), I, pp. 648-52

-----, 'Matthew Arnold', in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism: Studies in The Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England* (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press: 1933; repr. 1966), pp. 95-113

-----, 'Milton I', in *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), pp. 138-45

Elton, Oliver, *English Prose Numbers* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1922)

Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 'Manners', in *Essays and Poems* (New York: Library of America, 1983; 1996), pp. 513-32

Empson, William, *Milton's God* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961)

Evans, Joan, and John Howard Whitehouse, eds, *The Diaries of John Ruskin, 1835-1847* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956)

Falk, Robert, 'The Tragic Muse: Henry James's Loosest, Baggiest Novel?', in *Themes and Directions in American Literature, Essays in Honor of Leon Howard*, ed. by Ray B. Browne and Donald Pizer (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1969), pp. 148-62

Ferguson, Frances, *Solitude and the Sublime: Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation* (New York: Routledge, 1992)

Firebaugh, Joseph, 'A Schopenhauerian Novel: James's *The Princess Casamassima*', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 13.3 (1958), 177-97

Flaubert, Gustave, 'Préface' to Louis Bouillet, *Dernières chansons: poésies posthumes* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1880)

Flint, Kate, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

Fogel, Daniel Mark, *Henry James and The Structure of the Romantic Imagination* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981)

Follini, Tamara, "'A Geometry of His Own': Temporality, Referentiality, and Ethics in the Autobiographies', in *Palgrave Advances in Henry James Studies*, ed. by Peter Rawlings (Palgrave: Hampshire and New York, 2007), pp. 212-38

- , 'Henry James and the Spaces of "Silent-Speaking-Words"', no page numbers <<https://centerforhenryjamesstudies.weebly.com/uploads/3/8/1/0/38108301/follini.pdf>> [accessed 18 October 2019]
- , 'Introduction' to *Italian Hours* (London: Century Press, 1986), pp. vi-ix
- , 'The Friendship of Fanny Kemble and Henry James', *The Cambridge Quarterly*, 19 (1990), 230-42
- , 'Hero and Historian: The Autobiographical Writings of Henry James' (unpublished doctoral thesis: University of Cambridge, 1985)
- , 'Pandora's Box: The Family Correspondence in *Notes of a Son and Brother*', *Cambridge Quarterly*, 25 (1996), 26-40
- Foster, Finley M. K., 'Cadence in English Prose', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 16 (1917), 456-62
- Foucault, Michel, *The Care for the Self: Volume 3 of The History of Sexuality*, trans. by Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1986)
- Fox, Anthony, *Prosodic Features and Prosodic Structure: The Phonology of Suprasegmentals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)
- Freedman, Jonathan, *Professions of Taste: Henry James, British Aestheticism, and Commodity Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990)
- Funston, Judith E., '"All Art Is One": Narrative Techniques in Henry James's *Tragic Muse*', *Studies in the Novel*, 15 (1983), 344-55

Fuss, Diana, *Dying Modern: A Meditation on Elegy* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013)

Fussell, Edwin Sill, *The Catholic Side of Henry James* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

Gard, Rodger, ed., *Henry James: The Critical Heritage* (London and New York: Routledge, 1968)

Gass, William H., 'Culture, Self, and Style', in *Habitations of the Word: Essays* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), pp. 185-205

Gerber, Natalie, and David Nowell Smith, 'Editors Introduction: Intonation', *Thinking Verse*, 5 (2015), 1-14

Gerber, Natalie, 'Intonation and the Conventions of Free Verse', *Style*, 49.1 (2015), 8-34

Gillen, Frances, 'The Dramatist in His Drama: Theory vs. Effect in *The Awkward Age*', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 12 (1971), 663-74

Goble, Mark, 'Media and Communication Technologies', in *Henry James in Context*, ed. by David McWhirter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 203-13

Godden, Richard, 'Some Slight Shifts in the Manner of the Novel of Manners', in *Henry James: Fiction as History*, ed. by Ian F. A. Bell (London: Vision Press, 1984), pp. 156-83

- Goetz, William R., 'The Allegory of Representation in *The Tragic Muse*', *Journal of Narrative Technique*, 8 (1978), 151-64
- Gordon, D.J., and John Stokes, 'The Reference of The Tragic Muse', in *The Air of Reality: New Essays on Henry James*, ed. by John Goode (London: Methuen, 1972), pp. 91-167
- Graham, Kenneth, *The Drama of Fulfilment: An Approach to the Novels* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975)
- Graham, Wendy, 'Notes on a Native Son: Henry James's New York', *American Literary History*, 21.2 (2009), 239-67
- Green, Roland and Stephen Cushman, eds, *The Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms: Third Edition* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016)
- Greenslade, William, 'The Power of Advertising: Chad Newsome and the Meaning of Paris in *The Ambassadors*', *English Literary History*, 49 (1982), 99-122
- Griffin, Susan, ed., 'Introduction' to *The Europeans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. xxviii-lv
- , *The Historical Eye: The Texture of the Visual in Late James* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991)
- Griffiths, Eric, 'The Lavender of the Subjunctive', review of Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey K. Pullum, *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (2002), *The Guardian* (13 July 2002)  
<<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/jul/13/referenceandlanguages.highereducation>> [accessed 1 November 2019]

-----, *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018)

-----, 'Writing and Speaking: The Work of Eliot, Yeats and Pound' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 1980)

Gumperz, John J., 'Foreword' to *Prosody in Conversation: Interactional Studies*, ed. by Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen and Margret Selting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. x-xii

Habegger, Alfred, "'What Maisie knew": Henry James's Bildungsroman of the artist as queer moralist', in *Enacting History in Henry James: Narrative, Power, and Ethics*, ed. by Gert Buelens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 93-108

Hadley, Tessa, *Henry James and the Imagination of Pleasure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

Hale, E. Jr., 'Poetic Rhythms in Prose', *The Atlantic Monthly*, 78 (1896), 227-32

Harding, D.W., *Words into Rhythm: English Speech Rhythm in Verse and Prose* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976)

Harris, Roy, 'Communication and Language', in *The Foundations of Linguistic Theory: Selected Writings of Roy Harris*, ed. by Nigel Love (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 136-50

Haviland, Beverly, *Henry James's Last Romance: Making Sense of the Past in the American Scene* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)

Hawthorne, Nathaniel, *Passages from the French and Italian Note-Books of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, 2 vols (London: Strahan and Co., 1871)

Hayes, Kevin J., ed., *Henry James: The Contemporary Reviews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *The Science of Logic*, trans. by George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

Herford, Oliver, 'Commencement or Commemoration', *Literary Imagination*, 15 (2013), 20-34

-----, *Henry James's Style of Retrospect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016)

Hertz, Neil, *The End of the Line* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985)

Hillis Miller, J., *Versions of Pygmalion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1900)

Holder, Alan, *Rethinking Meter: A New Approach to the Verse Line* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1995)

Horne, Philip, "A palpable imaginable *visitable* past": Henry James and the Eighteenth Century', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 32 (2008), 14-28

-----, *Henry James and Revision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990)

-----, 'Introduction' to *The Tragic Muse*, ed. by Philip Horne (London: Penguin, 1995), pp. vii-xxix

-----, “‘Where Did She Get Hold of That?’”: Shakespeare in Henry James’s *The Tragic Muse*, in *Victorian Shakespeare, Volume 2: Literature and Culture*, ed. by Gail Marshall and Adrian Poole (London: Macmillan, 2003), pp. 100-13

Howells, William Dean, and others, *In After Days: Thoughts on the Future Life* (London: Harper and Brothers, 1910)

-----, ‘Our Daily Speech’, *Harper’s Bazaar*, 40 (1906), 930-34

Hutchison, Hazel, “‘An Embroidered Veil of Sound’”: The Word in the Machine in Henry James’s *In the Cage*, *Henry James Review*, 34 (2013), 147-62

-----, *Seeing and Believing: Henry James and the Spiritual World* (New York: Macmillan, 2006)

Isle, Walter, *Experiments in Form: Henry James’s Novels, 1896-1901* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968)

James, Henry, *A Small Boy and Others: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Peter Collister (New York and London: the author, 1913, 1914; repr. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011)

-----, *Complete Stories, 1864-1874* (New York: Library of America, 1999)

-----, *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America*, ed. by Richard Howard (New York: Library of America, 1993)

-----, *Daisy Miller: A Study, An International Episode, Four Meetings*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1879)



- , *The Europeans: A Sketch*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1878)
- , *Essays in London and Elsewhere* (London: Osgood, McIlvaine and Co, 1893)
- , *Henry James: A Life in Letters*, ed. by Philip Horne (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1999; New York: Viking Press, 1999)
- , *Henry James on Culture: Collected Essays on Politics and the American Social Scene*, ed. by Pierre A. Walker (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999)
- , *Henry James Letters*, ed. by Leon Edel, 4 vols (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1974–84; London: Macmillan, 1974–1984)
- , *French Poets and Novelists* (London: Macmillan, 1878)
- , 'Introduction' to *Madame Bovary*, trans. by W. Blaydes (New York: P.F Collier and Son, 1902), pp. v-xliii
- , *Italian Hours* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1909)
- , *The Ivory Tower* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons: 1917)
- , *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*, ed. by Leon Edel and Mark Wilson (New York: The Library of America, 1984)
- , *Literary Criticism: French Writers, Other European Writers, The Prefaces to the New York Edition*, ed. by Leon Edel and Mark Wilson (New York: The Library of America, 1984)

- , *Notes of a Son and Brother and The Middle Years: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Peter Collister (New York and London: the author, 1914; repr. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011)
- , 'The Altar of the Dead', in *Terminations* (London: William Heinemann, 1895)
- , *The American* (London: Macmillan, 1879)
- , *The American Scene*, ed. by Peter Collister (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019)
- , *The Aspern Papers, Louisa Pallant, The Modern Warning*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1888), I
- , *The Author of Beltraffio* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1885)
- , 'The Awkward Age', *Harper's Weekly*, 42 (July-December 1898), 1011-15
- , *The Awkward Age* (London: Heinemann, 1899)
- , *The Awkward Age* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1899)
- , 'The Beast in the Jungle', in *The Better Sort* (London: Methuen and Co., 1903), pp. 189-244
- , 'Browning in Venice. Being Recollections by the Late Katharine De Kay Bronson, With a Prefatory Note by Henry James', *Cornhill Magazine*, 12 (1902), 145-71

- , *The Cambridge Edition of the Complete Fiction of Henry James*, ed. by Michael Anesko, Tamara L. Follini, Philip Horne, Adrian Poole, 34 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015–), eight volumes to date
- , *The Complete Notebooks of Henry James*, ed. by Leon Edel and Lyall H. Powers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987)
- , *The Complete Plays of Henry James*, ed. by Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis Ltd., 1949)
- , *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama, vol. 1: Art*, ed. by Peter Collister (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016)
- , *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama, vol. 2: Drama*, ed. by Peter Collister (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016)
- , *The Golden Bowl* (London: Methuen and Co., 1905)
- , 'The Late James Payn', *Illustrated London News*, 9 (1898), 500
- , *The Letters of Henry James*, ed. by Percy Lubbock, 4 vols (London: Macmillan, 1920)
- , *The Madonna of the Future and Other Tales*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1879)
- , *The New York Edition of the Novels and Tales of Henry James*, 24 vols (New York and London: 1907-1909)
- , *The Outcry* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911)

- , *The Princess Casamassima*, 3 vols (London: Macmillan, 1886)
- , 'The Question of our Speech', *Appleton's Booklovers Magazine*, 6 (1905), 199-210
- , *The Question of Our Speech; The Lesson of Balzac; Two Lectures* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin-Riverside Press, 1905)
- , *The Sacred Fount* (London: Methuen and Co, 1901)
- , *The Sense of the Past* (London: William Collins Sons and Co., 1917)
- , *The Soft Side* (London: Methuen and Co., 1900)
- , *The Tragic Muse*, 2 vols (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1890)
- , *The Two Magics* (London: William Heinemann, 1898)
- , *The Wheel of Time* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1893)
- , *The Wings of the Dove*, 2 vols (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902)
- , *The Wings of the Dove* (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co., Ltd., 1902)
- , *Transatlantic Sketches* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1875)
- , *What Maisie Knew* (Chicago: Herbert Stone and Co., 1897)

-----, *William Wetmore Story and His Friends: From Letters, Diaries, and Recollections*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1903)

James Sr., Henry, 'On Consciousness and Immortality', in *The James Family: Including Selections from the Writings of Henry James Senior, William, Henry & Alice James*, ed. by F. O. Matthiessen (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1947), pp. 587-616

James, William, *The Letters of William James. Edited by His Son Henry James*, 2 vols (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1920)

-----, *The Principles of Psychology*, 2 vols (New York: the author, 1890; repr. New York: Dover Publications, 1950)

-----, *Writings 1878-1899* (New York: Library of America, 1992)

-----, *Writings 1902-1910* (New York: Library of America, 1987)

Jobe, Steven, H., 'Henry James and the Philosophic Actor', *American Literature*, 62 (1990), 32-43

Johnson, Kendall, *Henry James and the Visual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

Kant, Immanuel, *The Critique of Judgement*, trans. by Werner Pluhar (Cambridge: Hackett, 1987)

Kaplan, Fred, *Henry James: The Imagination of Genius: A Biography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1992)

- Kemble, Fanny, *Further Records 1848-1883: A Series of Letters by Frances Anne Kemble*, 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1890)
- , *Records of a Girlhood*, 3 vols (London: Bentley, 1878)
- , *Records of Later Life*, 3 vols (London: Bentley, 1882)
- Knowles, Gerald, 'Variable Strategies in Intonation', in *Intonation, Accent and Rhythm: Studies in Discourse Phonology*, ed. by Dafydd Gibbon and Helmut Richter (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), pp. 226-41
- Krapp, George Philip, *Elements of English Grammar* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980)
- Krasner, James, *The Entangled Eye: Visual Perception and the Representation of Nature in Post-Darwinian Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)
- Krook, Dorothea, *The Ordeal of Consciousness in Henry James* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968)
- Kurnick, David, '"Horrible Impossible": Henry James's Awkward Stage', *Henry James Review*, 26.2 (2005), 109-29
- Latour, Bruno, 'Nature at the Cross-Roads: The Bifurcation of Nature and its End', in *What is the Style of Matters of Concern? Two Lectures in Empirical Philosophy* (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 2008), pp. 9-26
- , 'Reflections on Etienne Souriau's *Les différents modes d'existence*', in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, ed. by Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, Graham Harman (Melbourne: Re.press, 2011), pp. 304-33

- Lecerle, Jean-Jacques, and Denise Riley, *The Force of Language* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)
- Legouvé, Ernest, *Reading as A Fine Art*, trans. by Abby Langdon Alger (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1879)
- Leighton, Angela, *Hearing Things: The Work of Sound in Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018)
- Levander, Carol, *Voices of the Nation: Women and Public Speech in Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)
- Levenson, Michael, 'Fin-de-siècle London (1890-1900)', in *Henry James in Context*, ed. by David McWhirter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 37-46
- Lipskey, Adam, *Rhythm as a Distinguishing Characteristic of Prose Style* (New York: The Science Press, 1907)
- , 'Rhythm in Prose', *Sewanee Review*, 16 (1908), 277-89
- Litvak, Joseph, *Caught in the Act: Theatricality in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986)
- Lodge, David, 'Strether by the River', in *The Language of Fiction: Essays in Criticism and Verbal Analysis* (Oxford: Routledge; repr. 2001), pp. 189-21
- , *The Art of Fiction* (London: Vintage, 2011)

Loesch, Katharine T., 'Literary Ambiguity and Oral Performance', in *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 51.3 (1965), 258–67

-----, 'Reply to Mr Chatman', *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 52.3 (1966), 286–89

Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, 'Sonnet: On Mrs Kemble's Readings from Shakespeare', in *The Seaside and Fireside* (Boston: Ticknor Reed and Fields, 1850)

Longfellow, Samuel, ed., *The Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow; With Extracts from his Journals and Correspondence*, ed. by Samuel Longfellow, 3 vols (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1891), II

Looby, Christopher, *Voicing America: Language, Literary Form, and the Origins of the United States* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994)

Loti, Pierre, *Impressions*, introduced by Henry James (London: Westminster, Constable and Co., 1898)

-----, *Matelot* (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1893)

Lubbock, Percy, *The Craft of Fiction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987)

Lukács, Georg, *The Theory of the Novel*, trans. by Anna Bostock (Cambridge, MA: the MIT Press, 1971)

Lustig, T.J., *Henry James and the Ghostly* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)



-----, 'James, Arnold, "Culture", and "Modernity"; or, A Tale of Two Dachshunds', *Cambridge Quarterly*, 37 (2008), 164-93

McWhirter, David, ed., *Henry James in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014)

-----, 'Henry James, (Post) Modernist?', *Henry James Review*, 25 (2004), 168–94

-----, "'The Whole Chain of Relation and Responsibility': Henry James and the New York Edition", in *Henry James's New York Edition: The Construction of Authorship*, ed. by David McWhirter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 1-22

-----, 'What's Awkward About *The Awkward Age*?', in *Centuries' Ends, Narrative Means*, ed. by Robert Newman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 212-21

Meyer, Steven, *Irresistible Dictation: Gertrude Stein and the Correlations of Writing and Science* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001)

Michael, Ian, *English Grammatical Categories and the Tradition to 1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970)

Mill, J.S., *The Spirit of the Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942)

Millgate, Michael, *Testamentary Acts: Browning, Tennyson, James, Hardy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)

Mizruchi, Susan, 'Reproducing Women in *The Awkward Age*', *Representations*, 38 (1992), 101-30

Moon, Heath, 'Saving James from Modernism: How to Read *The Sacred Fount*', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 49:2 (1988), 120-41

Nichols, Tom, and Tessa Hadley, 'James, Ruskin, and Tintoretto', *Henry James Review*, 23.3 (2002), 294-303

Nicoll, Allardyce, *A History of Late Nineteenth-Century Drama, 1850-1900*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1946), I

Nussbaum, Martha, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990)

O'Farrell, Mary Ann, 'Manners', in *Henry James in Context*, ed. by David McWhirter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 192-202

Ohi, Kevin, 'Children', in *Henry James in Context*, ed. by David McWhirter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 115-25

-----, *Henry James and the Queerness of Style* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2011)

Ojala, Aatos, *Aestheticism and Oscar Wilde*, 2 vols (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Tiedekatemian Toimituksia, 1955), II

Ovid, *Metamorphosis: Books IX-XV*, trans. by Frank Justus Miller, 2 vols (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1912; repr. 1968), II

Palmer, George Herbert, 'Hexameters and Rhythmic Prose', *Atlantic Monthly*, 66 (1890), 526-34

Pater, Walter, *The Renaissance*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)

Patterson, William Morrison, *The Rhythms of Prose* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1917)

Pearson, Gabriel, 'The Novel to End All Novels: *The Golden Bowl*', in *The Air of Reality: New Essays on Henry James*, ed. by John Goode (London: Methuen, 1972), pp. 301-60

Perosa, Sergio, *Henry James and the Experimental Novel* (Charlottesville: Virginia University Press, 1978)

Perry, Seamus, *Alfred Tennyson* (Devon: Northcote, 2005)

Picker, John M., *Victorian Soundscapes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

Piette, Adam, *Remembering and the Sound of Words: Mallarmé, Proust, Joyce, Beckett* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996)

Pippin, Robert, *Henry James and Modern Moral Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

-----, 'On Maisie's Knowing Her Own Mind', in *A Companion to Henry James*, ed. by Greg. W. Zacharias (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 121-38

- Poirier, Richard, *A World Elsewhere: The Place of Style in American Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966)
- , *The Comic Sense of Henry James: A Study of the Early Novels* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1960)
- Poole, Adrian, 'Introduction' to *What Maisie Knew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. vii-xxvi
- Posnock, Ross, *The Trial of Curiosity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991)
- Pound, Ezra, 'Henry James', in *Instigations of Ezra Pound, Together with An Essay on the Chinese Written Character by Ernest Fenollosa* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920), pp. 106-67
- Poyatos, Fernando, *Paralanguage* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1993)
- Prins, Yopie, 'Voice Inverse', *Victorian Poetry*, 42.1 (2004), 43-59
- Prynne, J. H., 'English Poetry and Emphatical Language: Wharton Lecture on English Poetry', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 74 (1988), 135-169
- Quirk, Randolph, and others, *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (London: Longman, 1985)
- Ravinthiran, Vidyan, 'The Spontaneity of Hopkins's Journal Prose', *The Review of English Studies*, 64 (2012), 838-56
- Rawlings, Peter, *Henry James and the Abuse of the Past* (London: Palgrave, 2005)

Rawnsley, H.D., *Memories of the Tennysons* (Glasgow: J. MacLehose and Sons, 1900)

Ricks, Christopher, 'An Interview with Sir Christopher Ricks', *The Literateur*, <<http://literateur.com/an-interview-with-sir-christopher-ricks-%E2%80%93-part-i/>> [accessed July 2019]

-----, *T.S. Eliot and Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988)

Riehl, Robin Vella, 'James and the "No-Comma": Punctuation and Authority in "Daisy Miller"', *Henry James Review*, 35 (2014), 69-75

Ringuette, Dana, 'Imagining the End: Henry James, Charles Sanders Peirce, and the "Reach Beyond the Laboratory Brain"', *Henry James Review*, 20.2 (1999), 155-65

-----, "'This Matter of Attention and Discrimination': Henry James's Essays on Speech, Manners, and American Women", *Henry James Review*, 31.2 (2010), 125-41

Rivkin, Julie, *False Positions: The Representational Logics of Henry James's Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996)

Rowe, John Carlos, *The Other Henry James* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998)

-----, 'The Politics of Innocence in Henry James's *The American*', in *New Essays on 'The American'*, ed. by Martha Banta (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 87-88

- Ruesch, Jurgen, *Nonverbal Communication: Notes on the Visual Perception of Human Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956)
- Ruskin, John, *Modern Painters*, 5 vols (London: Smith Elder and Co., 1843-1860)
- , *Praeterita*, ed. by Francis O’Gorman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)
- Russell, David, *Tact: Aesthetic Liberalism and the Essay Form in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018)
- Said, Edward, *On Late Style* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006)
- Saintsbury, George, *A History of English Prose Rhythm* (London: Macmillan, 1912)
- , *A History of English Prosody: From the Twelfth Century to the Present Day*, 3 vols (London: Macmillan, 1910)
- , *Matthew Arnold* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1899)
- Salmon, Richard, ‘Henry James, Popular Culture, and Cultural Theory’, *Henry James Review*, 19 (1998), pp. 211-18
- Saussure, Ferdinand de, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. by Roy Harris (London: Duckworth, 1983)
- Savage, Olive, *Rhythm in Prose Illustrated from Authors of the Nineteenth Century* (London: University College, 1917)

- Scott, Clive, 'Blaise Cendrars', in *Twentieth-Century French Poetry: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Hugues Azérad, Peter Collier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 53-60
- , *Street Photography: From Atget to Cartier-Bresson* (London: I.B. Tauris and Co., 2007)
- , *Vers libre: The Emergence of Free verse in France, 1886-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990)
- Schafer, R. Murray, *The Tuning of the World* (New York: Knopf, 1977), reprinted as *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, VT: Destiny, 1994)
- Schopenhauer, Arthur, *Two Essays by Arthur Schopenhauer*, translator not given (London: George Bell and Sons, 1889)
- Scott, Fred Newton, 'The Scansion of Prose Rhythm', *Modern Language Association*, 20 (1905), 707-28
- Sealts, Merton M., ed., *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 16 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), X
- Seltzer, Mark, *Henry James and the Art of Power* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984)
- Shakespeare, William, *The Complete Sonnets and Poems*, ed. by Colin Burrow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1916; repr. 1958)

- Short, R.W., 'The Sentence Structure of Henry James', *American Literature*, 18 (1946), 71-88
- Sider, Justin, *Parting Words: Victorian Poetry and Public Address* (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2018)
- Sklenicka, Carol J., 'Henry James's Evasion of Ending in *The Golden Bowl*', *Henry James Review*, 4.1 (1982), 50-56
- Smith, David Nowell, *On Voice in Poetry: The Work of Animation* (London: Macmillan, 2015)
- Stafford, William T., 'Emerson and the James Family', *American Literature*, 24 (1953), 433-61
- Stewart, Garrett, *Death Sentences: Styles of Dying in British Fiction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984)
- Stanley, Kate, *Practices of Surprise in American Literature after Emerson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018)
- Steegmuller, Francis, ed. and trans., Francis, *The Letters of Gustave Flaubert: 1830-1857*, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980)
- Stevenson, Elizabeth, *The Crooked Corridor: A Study of Henry James* (London: Macmillan, 1949)
- Stevenson, Robert Louis, 'On Style in Literature: Its Technical Elements', in *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson*, 10 vols (New York: Bigelow, Smith and Co., 1906), IX: *The Essays of Robert Louis Stevenson*, pp. 267-84



Stewart, Garrett, *Reading Voices: Literature and the Phonotext* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1990)

Stewart, J. I. M., *Eight Modern Writers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963)

Stone, Donald David, *Novelists in a Changing World: Meredith, James, and the Transformation of English Fiction in the 1880's* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972)

Stowe, William W., "'Oh, the land's all right!': Landscape in James's American Scene", *Henry James Review*, 24.1 (2003), 45-56

Strawson, Galen, 'Cognitive Phenomenology: Real Life', in *Cognitive Phenomenology*, ed. by Tim Bayne and Michelle Montague (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

Taine, Hippolyte, 'Thackerary', in *Essais de Critique et d'Histoire* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1858), pp. 149-214

Tanner, Tony, 'Introduction' to *The Europeans: A Sketch* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), pp. 7-29

-----, *Henry James and the Art of Nonfiction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995)

-----, *The Reign of Wonder: Naivety and Reality in American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977)

- Taylor, Andrew, *Henry James and the Father Question* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)
- Taylor, Bayard, *John Godfrey's Fortunes; Related by Himself; A Story of American Life* (New York: G.P. Putnam; Hurd and Houghton, 1865)
- , *The Prophet: A Tragedy* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1874)
- Teahan, Sheila, *The Rhetorical Logic of Henry James* (London: Louisiana State University Press, 1995)
- Tennyson, Alfred Lord, *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, ed. by Christopher Ricks (London: Longman, 1969; repr. 2007)
- Thurschwell, Pamela, 'Henry James and Theodora Bosanquet: On the typewriter, *In the Cage*, at the Ouija board', *Textual Practice*, 13 (1999), 5-23
- Tintner, Adeline, 'Bringing Nanda Forward, or Acting Your Age in *The Awkward Age*', *Critical Quarterly*, 58.2 (2006), 72-90
- , *The Cosmopolitan World of Henry James* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991)
- Todorov, Tzvetan, 'The Verbal Age', trans. by Patricia Martin Gibby, *Critical Inquiry*, 2 (1977), 351-71
- Torgovnick, Marianna, *Closure in the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981)

- Trilling, Lionel, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (New York: Doubleday, 1950)
- Tsang, Philip, 'A Transcript of Impressions: *The American Scene* and the Jamesian Aesthetics of Lateness', *Henry James Review*, 35.3 (2014), 295–306
- Tsur, Reuven, 'A Conversation with Reuven Tsur on Intonation and Prosody', *Thinking Verse*, 5 (2015), 214-27
- Tucker, Herbert, 'Arnold and the Authorisation of Criticism', in *Knowing the Past: Victorian Literature and Culture*, ed. by Suzy Anger (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001)
- Tuttleton, James, 'Propriety and Fine Perception: James's "The Europeans"', *The Modern Language Review*, 73 (1978), 481-95
- , *The Novel of Manners in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972)
- van Slyck, Phyllis, 'Knowledge and Representation in *The Ambassadors*: Strether's Discriminating Gaze', *Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts*, 39.4 (1997), 557-79
- Vericat, Fabio L., 'No Such Thing as Voice Pure and Simple': Henry James's Elocutionary Insecurities and *The American*', *Novel*, 51.3 (2018), 502-524
- Walters, Margaret, 'Keeping the Place Tidy for the Young Female Mind: *The Awkward Age*', in *The Air of Reality: New Essays on Henry James*, ed. by John Goode (London: Methuen, 1972), pp. 190-218

Ward, J.A., 'Strether's Vision of Evil', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 14 (1959), 45-58

Ward, Mary Augusta, *Miss Bretherton* (London: Macmillan, 1884)

Watt, Ian, 'The First Paragraph of *The Ambassadors*: An Explication', *Essays in Criticism*, 19 (1960), 250-74

Wennerstrom, Ann, *The Music of Everyday Speech: Prosody and Discourse Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

Wheeler, Michael, *Death and the Future Life in Victorian Literature and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)

Wiesenfarth, Joseph, *Henry James and the Dramatic Analogy: A Study of the Major Novels of the Middle Period* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1963)

Wilde, Oscar, *Oscar Wilde: The Major Works*, ed. by Isobel Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989; repr. 2000)

Wilkinson, John, *Lyric in its Times: Temporalities in Verse Breath and Stone* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019)

Wilson, Edmund, *The Triple Thinkers: Twelve Essays on Literary Subjects* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948)

Winner, Viola Hopkins, *Henry James and the Visual Arts* (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 1970)

Wood, James, 'Cult of the Master', *The Atlantic* (April 2003), 102-08

Wordsworth, William, *William Wordsworth: The Major Works*, ed. by Stephen Gill  
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000; rev. 2008)

Yeazell, Ruth Bernard, *Language and Knowledge in the Late Novels of Henry James*  
(Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1976)

-----, 'Remembrance of Things Present in *The Ambassadors*', *Henry James Review*,  
38.3 (2017), 231-37

----- ed., *The Death and Letters of Alice James* (Berkeley: University of California  
Press, 1981)

Young, Filson, "Browning and Henry James", *The Saturday Review* (May 11 1912),  
584

-----, 'The Things that Matter', *The Pall Mall Gazette* (May 8 1912), 5

Zwerdling, Alex, *Improvised Europeans: American Literary Expatriates and the  
Siege of London* (New York: Basic Books, 1998)